PATTERNS OF MOVEMENT IN MODERN RELIGIOUS DRAMA

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century has been a time of great interest in the drama. Playwrights of our time have attracted much attention through their vigor in presenting significant issues on the stage, and through their restless and often brilliant experimentation with dramatic forms. Some of the most gifted writers of our time have produced religious dramas, in which they have probed and portrayed some of the religious issues of the century. The purpose of this study was to classify some of the major religious dramas of the time, according to the patterns of dramatic movement discernible in them.

For the purposes of this study the term "modern" will have the same meaning it has when it is used to designate modern drama generally; that is, drama since Ibsen. There is, unfortunately, no easy and precise way of defining exactly what is meant by "religious" drama. All drama ultimately has theological implications, so that all modern plays might well claim inclusion in a study such as this. Practical considerations require at least some general restrictions; therefore, this study will be concerned mainly with plays that are primarily concerned with man's relationship to a supernatural order, or with man's proper relation-

ship to man, under a supernatural order.

Critical discussion of concepts such as action and incident, conflict, and dramatic structure, all assume that movement is essential to drama. In the words of Edward Wright, "A play should be a movement toward something."[1] John Gassner enlarged on this idea: "We move with the play from incident to incident, and from one response to another. We experience life directly as it proceeds from moment to moment."[2] Gassner here brought out the important point that when there is movement on the stage, the audience moves in response. Writing in the journal, Letter to Laymen, Bill Cozart said, "The more I study worship and drama, the more I become convinced that the fundamental dimension in which both of them participate is that of movement."[3]

The term movement, as applied to drama, usually means action and incident. This study will attempt to get inside the movement of each of the plays to be examined, to determine what forces cause or shape the movement. In some cases the study will center on the inner life of a protagonist,

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[1]Edward Wright, Understanding Today's Theatre (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1959), p. 16.

[2]John Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre: from Aeschylus to Turgenev (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1963), p. XIII.

[3]Bill Cozart, "Liturgy and the Theatre," Letter to Laymen (Austin, Texas: Christian Faith-and-Life Community, VI, No. 5, January, 1960), p. 1.

examining the actions he initiates, and his responses to the forces which impinge upon him. In other cases there will be considerable stress upon the power of external events to alter the course and meaning of life for the protagonist. In all cases the meaning of events and of human action is considered of primary importance, and the recounting of events in the plays must be regarded strictly as a means of getting at the significance of those events.

If this study is to have any significance apart from its being a beneficial academic exercise, that significance will have to be inferred from the kinds of movement portrayed in modern religious drama, and from the particular forces or beliefs which cause the movement. It seems axiomatic that the particular beliefs, concerns, and problems of an age will be reflected in its serious drama. We should, therefore, expect modern religious drama to reflect the major religious concerns of men in our time.

The primary materials for the study consist of some thirty plays, written by authors ranging from George Bernard Shaw and D. H. Lawrence to Jean Paul Sartre and Samuel Beckett. While a very few of the plays do not qualify as religious drama, according to the general criteria given above, all of them bear strongly upon the religious concerns of our time. Sartre's No Exit, for example, seems to be more a philosophical play than a religious one, but

Existentialism is of so much concern to the religious community that the play seems to belong in this study. Each play was studied carefully to determine the nature of its central movement. What happens to the protagonist? Does he experience growth, or personal change of some other form? Does he become a martyr? Does he find some form of salvation? What are the forces that move the protagonist along the path he follows? Is the protagonist moved by forces that he does not understand? The answers to these and other questions led to the classification of the plays into six basic patterns of movement, which are reflected in the headings of chapters two through seven.

Since it makes no claim to have included all modern religious drama, the present study must be considered a partial or preliminary one; yet, the range of plays covered here is sufficiently diverse in authorship and subject matter to make some claim to fair representation of the religious drama of the twentieth century.

Each pattern of movement is represented by at least two plays. The format of the chapters is as follows: one play is chosen as the major example of the type, and is examined in some detail; then one or two other plays are examined in somewhat less detail. More than one play is used in each chapter because the additional plays illustrate variations on the pattern, and they help to confirm that

each pattern does represent a body of plays, and not just one isolated play. The major examples were not chosen according to any single principle: Hochhuth's The Deputy was chosen to exemplify dramas of martyrdom because it deals with a problem of great current interest; Eliot's The Cocktail Party was chosen to represent dramas of salvation because his Murder in the Cathedral gets secondary treatment under dramas of martyrdom, and it seemed proper to give one of Eliot's plays major attention. These two examples show that the choices do not represent absolute judgements of merit, but are the result of an effort to balance many considerations. The detail in which second and third examples are treated varies according to the complexity of the plotting.

CHAPTER II

THE PATH OF SALVATION

Salvation has been a major theme of Christian drama ever since Everyman and other morality plays dramatized the path of man to God. T. S. Eliot's The Cocktail Party deals with salvation through forms of vocation. Salvation by faith, through grace, is presented in two plays by Charles Williams: The House by the Stable, and Grab and Grace.

In The Cocktail Party the movement to life as vocation comes through a reorientation of love. In the beginning, all the major characters are involved in self-love, projected onto other persons. To break out of that self-defeating way of life and find fulfillment in life as vocation they must learn the way of altruistic love, to empty themselves for the good of others.

The Cocktail Party has been described as a play on two levels.[1] On the surface, it is a drawing-room comedy, but under the surface, it deals with the problem of misdirected love and the quest for self-identity.[2] The two-

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[1] William Arrowsmith, "The Comedy of T. S. Eliot," in Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism, T. Bogard and W. Oliver, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, Galaxy Books, 1965), p. 134.

[2] Carol H. Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 166-168.

layered structure comes to focus in the person of Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, who first appears as an unidentified guest at a cocktail party, and is later introduced as a psychiatrist, whose "practice" seems to consist solely of acting as one of a company of "Guardians," spiritual advisers whose precise nature is never defined. The problems of Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayne have evidently come to the attention of the "Guardians."

After the introductory patter of the cocktail party, a series of sub-scenes reveals a complex tangle of misdirected and unreciprocated loves. Edward has been having an affair with Celia Coplestone, who is in love with him. Lavinia has had an affair with Peter Quilpe, who has broken with her because he loves Celia. Edward loves no one, and no one loves Lavinia. The idea of misdirected love is of fundamental importance, and is repeated many times throughout the play, with reference to Edward, to Lavinia, to Celia, and to Peter. Each of these people is really in love with an ideal which he has projected out of his own needs; not one of them sees his beloved as a person existing in his own right, and having his own needs.[1]

The conversations between Edward and Reilly immediately after the party reveal that Edward has never loved nor valued Lavinia for herself; he has taken her for granted,

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[1] Ibid., p. 166.

and has seen her as an adjunct to himself. Reilly interprets Edward's feelings about Lavinia's leaving him, saying that Edward is feeling a very personal kind of loss or reduction. He says:

> There's a loss of personality;
> Or rather, you've lost touch with the person
> You thought you were. You no longer feel quite human.
> You're suddenly reduced to the status of an object --
> A living object, but no longer a person.[1]

Edward's movement to a reorientation of his love begins when he recognizes that he must gain some understanding of his past relationship to Lavinia before he can have a valid sense of his own identity. He says:

> I must find out who she is, to find out who I am.[2]

Celia begins her development when Edward shocks her with the announcement that they must end their affair. Unreality becomes the key word for her. She says to Edward:

> Perhaps the dream was better. It seemed the real reality,
> And if this is reality, it is very like a dream.
> . . .
> Oh, don't think that <u>you</u> can humiliate me!
> Humiliation -- it's something I've done to myself.
> I am not sure even that you seem real enough
> To humiliate me.[3]

The question of unreality faces Peter Quilpe also. He tells Edward of his love for Celia, of the tranquillity he has known with her, and of the moments of perception they

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[1] T. S. Eliot, <u>The Cocktail Party</u> (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1950), p. 29.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 32.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 63.

have shared. Agitated, he says:

> . . . I have been telling you of something real --
> My first experience of reality
> And perhaps it is the last.[1]

But later he begins to wonder about this "reality," asking:

> Did we really share these interests? Did we really feel
> the same . . .
> There was something real. But what is the reality . . .[2]

Lavinia has deceived herself about Peter Quilpe. During the interview of act two, Reilly points out to her that she had known in her heart that Peter was not in love with her, and that it had been humiliating to her to know that she had forced him into the position of being her lover.

All the characters who have been involved in the merry-go-round of misdirected love have been living lives of unreality. Now the illusions have melted away, and they all know they must rebuild their lives. Edward and Celia, as shown earlier, have already begun their movement by recognizing their mistakes. Lavinia has already visited Sir Henry, so that she too has begun a movement to a new life.

The quarrel between Edward and Lavinia is further evidence of the beginning of their movement towards salvation, through a reorientation of love. She accuses him of apathy, and he accuses her of excessive and wrongheaded

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[1] Ibid., p. 46.

[2] Ibid., p. 47.

ambition, and of trying to "invent a personality" for him. Edward says that they seem to be right back in the same old trap, and yet there is a difference; now, he says, they can at least fight each other instead of just going to their separate corners. Lavinia finally says it is clear to her that they must not return to the kind of life they have lived up to the time of her leaving him.[1] Edward's point that they can at least fight is a significant one; up to now they have taken each other for granted and have not recognized the existence of any problems. The fight is an ugly scene, as many critics remark, but it is an important turning point in the change of consciousness Edward and Lavinia must undergo.

When Edward visits the consulting rooms of Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, he feels sure he must go to a sanatorium to get away from Lavinia. He says that she has so dominated his life that she has imposed a role on him, so that her absence has made him begin to doubt the reality of his own existence.

> I cannot live with her -- that is now intolerable;
> I cannot live without her, for she has made me incapable
> Of having any existence of my own.[2]

He seems to feel that a stay in a sanatorium will enable him to recover a sense of his own selfhood.

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[1] Ibid., p. 98.

[2] Ibid., p. 112.

Lavinia's case is very different from Edward's. She has deceived herself that the cause of the emotional strain from which she has suffered for two months is her discovery of Edward's affair with Celia. Reilly forces her to see that the real cause is the defection of her own lover, Peter Quilpe. This, after five years of marriage to a man whose love she has not gained, has made her fear that no man can love her.

Moving them closer to reconciliation, Reilly points out that Edward and Lavinia have a great deal in common:

> The same isolation.
> A man who finds himself incapable of loving
> And a woman who finds that no man can love her.[1]

At length Edward sees that Reilly is pointing out for them a rather unspectacular first step on the road to achieving life as vocation, thus finding salvation. He says to his wife:

> Lavinia, we must make the best of a bad job.
> That is what he means.[2]

Reilly replies that once he has found that only the saints can do more than that, he will forget his own phrase, "And in forgetting it will alter the condition."[3] Before the Chamberlaynes can resolve their conflicts and build a new life, governed by a sense of vocation, they must come to terms with reality. Their love of ideals projected onto

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[1] Ibid., p. 125. [2] Ibid., p. 126. [3] Ibid.

others, out of their own needs, has been symptomatic of a refusal to accept the limitations of the kind of life they can reasonably expect to have. Once they have accepted things as they are, they will forget the struggle to accept reality, and will begin to transcend the limitations they now struggle to accept. This, then, will be their salvation.

Reilly dismisses the Chamberlaynes with the words, "Go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence."[1] Several critics identify these words as the Buddha's dying admonition to his disciples. This appears to be a very obscure allusion to the teaching of Hinayana Buddhism that the path of self-salvation consists of becoming free from the "Ten Fetters," the first of which is self-delusion.[2] The Chamberlaynes, if they are to continue their movement to salvation, must overcome self-delusions, for these are the root of their excessive expectations, their misdirected loves, and their inability to live together in harmony.

Celia Coplestone has no self-diagnosis and proposed treatment to offer when she comes to see Reilly. She feels that she cannot really justify her wanting to consult with him. She suffers from no delusions, "Except that the world

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[1]Eliot, The Cocktail Party, p. 128.

[2]Wing-Tsit Chan, "Buddhist Terminology," in An Encyclopedia of Religion, Vergilius Ferm, ed. (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 91.

I live in seems all a delusion."[1] Much of what Celia says to Reilly suggests that she is ready to renounce the common life. She now sees all human relationships as illusory, so that it no longer seems worthwhile to her to speak to anyone. She has a keen sense of solitude; it is not that she wants to be alone, but that she is aware that everyone is always alone. She feels a sense of sin, but not in the conventional sense. She is not aware of having done anything wrong, but feels that she has failed "someone or something outside of myself."[2] She feels the need to atone. She has a dreamlike memory of the exaltation of love, but questions the reality of the memory. If the exaltation is meaningless, she wants to be cured of the desire for something she cannot find, and of "the shame of not finding it."[3]

Reilly first offers Celia the same treatment accepted by the Chamberlaynes -- reconciliation to the common life. To Celia, however, a return to her former way of living would be a betrayal. She has had a vision of something, she doesn't know what, but she wants to devote herself to her vision. She feels that she could not give the kind of love that belongs to the common life.

Reilly tells her there is another way, but he cannot

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[1] Eliot, op. cit., p. 132. [2] Ibid., p. 137.

[3] Ibid., p. 139.

describe it for her because it is an unknown way.

> You will know very little until you get there;
> You will journey blind. But the way leads towards possession
> Of what you have sought for in the wrong place.[1]

Celia indicates the extent of her movement to salvation by choosing as her vocation the unknown way. Reilly dismisses her too with the Buddha's admonition, "Go in peace, my daughter. Work out your salvation with diligence."[2]

The denouement comes in the last minutes of preparation for another cocktail party at the Chamberlayne home. Two years have passed since Reilly sent Edward and Lavinia out to work out their salvation, and they have done well. They treat each other with kindness and consideration, if not quite with tenderness. They seem to have learned to know themselves, to have accepted the limitations of life for them, and to have altered somewhat the condition of having to "make the best of a bad job." Having made it their vocation to live to their best within their limitations, they have found the salvation which comes with the emptying of self in altruistic love. They have even learned enough to offer Peter Quilpe some Guardian-like advice.

Celia Coplestone and the Chamberlaynes have found

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[1] Ibid., p. 141.

[2] Ibid., p. 145.

salvation through vocation.[1] Peter Quilpe remains unchanged, except for a tentative move in the direction of conquering self-delusion, which comes just before the end of the play. During his two years in Hollywood he has clung to the hope that eventually he will get Celia a part in a movie, thus getting her a start on a career and also bringing her again into his life. Alex's revelation of her violent death in Kinkanja staggers him. There is nothing for him to do but carry on with his work, but now it all seems pointless. Lavinia tells him that he has cherished an image of Celia which he has made for himself, to satisfy his own needs. Peter admits that she is right and says that he has thought only of himself.

Carol Smith has shown how Eliot used the traditional Christian concept of the two paths to salvation in working out the resolution of The Cocktail Party. Followers of the Negative Way believe they must detach themselves from love of all created things. Through her rejection of the kind of life she has been living, and her feeling that all human relationships are illusory, Celia Coplestone exemplifies the Negative Way. Those who take the Affirmative Way believe they can express their love of God by accepting in love all

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[1]Nathan A. Scott, Jr., "The Theatre of T. S. Eliot," in Man in the Modern Theatre, Nathan A. Scott, Jr., ed. (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1965), p. 34.

created things, as images of the Divine. The Chamberlaynes represent the Affirmative Way. Smith went on to point out that the play shows a harmony between the two Ways.[1]

The most obvious sign of such harmony is the toast drunk by the Guardians after Celia and the Chamberlaynes have left to work out their salvation. Alex, Julia and Reilly drink to those who build the hearth and those who go on a journey.[2] Another sign of the harmony of the Ways comes when Celia asks which is better, and Reilly tells her that

> Neither way is better.
> Both ways are necessary. It is also necessary
> To make a choice between them.[3]

Near the end of the play, both Edward and Lavinia feel responsible for Celia's death. Their feelings of guilt, according to Smith, indicate a temporary breaking through of the spiritual into the lives of people who are ordinarily not much aware of such things. The curtain speeches indicate that the Chamberlaynes are relieved to get back into the familiar routine, free from the painful intensity of the moments of spiritual awareness they have just experienced.[4]

In spite of Reilly's assurance to Celia that neither way is better, and that both are necessary, it is difficult

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[1] Carol Smith, Eliot's Dramatic Theory, pp. 157-158.

[2] Eliot, The Cocktail Party, pp. 149-150.

[3] Ibid., p. 141. [4] Carol Smith, op. cit., p. 175.

to avoid the feeling that both Reilly and his creator consider the Negative Way superior to the Affirmative. Reilly's words to Julia reveal his feelings about the Affirmative Way, or the common life:

> To send them back: what have they to go back to?
> To the stale food mouldering in the larder,
> The stale thoughts mouldering in their minds.
> Each unable to disguise his own meanness
> From himself, because it is known to the other.[1]

Reilly has no comparable lines giving his feelings about the Negative Way, but he seems to share the reverence for it implied in the following lines spoken to him by Julia:

> Oh yes, she will go far. And we know where she is going.
> But what do we know of the terrors of the journey?
> You and I don't know the process by which the human is
> Transhumanised: what do we know
> Of the kind of suffering they must undergo
> On the way of illumination?[2]

In any case, Eliot's apparent distaste for the common life and his glamorization of the more austere way of saints do not affect the effectiveness with which the play dramatizes the movement of a married couple from serious alienation to reconciliation, and from a very thoughtless half-life to an acceptance of the common life as vocation.

Nathan A. Scott, Jr., pointed out the clear relationship between this acceptance of life as vocation and the consequent salvation or redemption of the people involved:

> Mr. Eliot's chief comment on the human situation -- which assumes the form of a restatement of the Christian

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[1] Eliot, The Cocktail Party, p. 146. [2] Ibid., p. 147.

> conception of "calling" or "vocation" -- registers with clarity and force. . . . Mr. Eliot manages . . . to make clear the . . . Christian insight into the integral relationship between "redemption" and "vocation."[1]

Eliot may have made Celia's vocation far more glamorous than that of the Chamberlaynes, but theirs leads no less clearly to redemption, and the evidence of their redemption, shown in the closing scene, is convincingly dramatic.

In The House by the Stable and its sequel Grab and Grace, Charles Williams presents a view of the path of salvation that is very different from that shown in Eliot's play, yet there is an important similarity between these two plays and The Cocktail Party. Williams' plays are handled in the traditional fashion of the morality play, with Man as the central figure, and the rest of the characters being personified virtues and vices. The Cocktail Party has a great deal of surface realism, which serves somewhat as camouflage for what is in its main intent essentially a morality play. The psychology of The House by the Stable and Grab and Grace does not even approach that of The Cocktail Party in its complexity and subtlety; Man in these plays is about as simple a character as the medieval Everyman. Salvation for Man is not clearly shown as integral to a pattern of life, as it is for Eliot's characters; it is a matter of Man's coming to see that his beloved Pride is not

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[1]Scott, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

worthy of his love, whereas the more prudent and less exciting Faith is well-deserving of his love. The consequences of this development for daily living are not spelled out; therefore, salvation remains much more of an abstraction in Williams' plays than in Eliot's, where there is at least a glimpse of the consequences of the spiritual development of Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayne.

In the opening scene of The House by the Stable, Man is dominated by his lover, Pride. Pride reassures Man of his primacy in his house, Earth, and her assurances make him feel very self-sufficient. There is symbolic evidence of sterility in Man: he drinks exellent wine, but no longer has any vines, and he has disposed of his stud horse. Man has a servant, Gabriel, whose tasks are symbolically significant: he polishes the silver, prepares the meals, and keeps Man's accounts.

Man's initial move towards salvation comes when he allows Gabriel to give food and shelter to Mary and Joseph, although Pride has tried to dissuade him, since the two travelers are not of Man's social class. As he shoots dice with Hell, the brother of Pride, Man hears voices from outside his house, and he calls Gabriel for news of Joseph and Mary. This is another important sign that Man is growing spiritually, since Pride has earlier assured him that he is alone. Gabriel intervenes in the dice game, and wins for

man, thus saving Man his "jewel" (soul), which Man has put up as his stake in the game.

When Gabriel takes him to see the newborn Jesus, Man feels guilty for having held back in helping Joseph and Mary, and he offers the child his jewel. Man's allowing his goods to be given to strangers, and his willingness to give his soul to the Christ-child signify his progress towards salvation, but he still has an important second step to take. He still hankers for his beautiful lover, Pride, even though Gabriel has sent her away, with her brother Hell. Man must redirect his love from Pride, to one more worthy of his love, and more capable of promoting his spiritual development.

Grab and Grace is subtitled It's The Second Step. As this play opens, Man has two new companions: Faith, a very proper lady, and Grace, a puckish young boy. When Hell and Pride return, Man tries to bring Pride into his household, and to establish her on good terms with Faith. Faith is adamant; she and Pride cannot live under the same roof. Hell and Pride use violence and deceit in an all-out effort to get rid of Faith, but Grace helps Man to see what rascals Hell and Pride are, so Man tells them they must go back to Hell's house. This allegorical battle, of course, depicts Man's struggles to overcome his pride, so as to live by faith. His struggle is further dramatized by his wrestling

and throwing Hell, while Faith defeats Pride, who has tried to stab her with Cain's knife. With Pride finally overcome by Faith, it seems that Man's movement to salvation is complete, and that is what he believes himself.

Just as Man is beginning to feel comfortable in his victory, Grace begins to whistle, showing his skepticism. In the closing lines of the play, man himself admits that salvation is a continuing process, not something that can be accomplished once and for always:

> A second step . . . a second step in love . . .
> What, O almighty Christ, what of the third?[1]

Williams' morality plays show salvation as a result of the redirection of love, but it is a very different matter from the redirection of love in The Cocktail Party. Man's love of Pride is analogous to the varieties of self-love portrayed by Eliot, but there is a difference. In Williams' plays salvation is a very subjective experience, in spite of the personification of the spiritual forces involved in the struggle and movement. Man moves, with difficulty and some backsliding, from the love of Pride to the love of Faith, and so is saved. That is all we know. We have no idea what shape Man's life will take now that he is saved. As a matter of fact, his life is an abstraction from

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[1]Charles Williams, "Grab and Grace," Religious Drama 3, Marvin Halverson, ed. (Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Co., 1959), p. 78.

the beginning, so it is in the nature of the play that we can never know any realistic details of Man's life. In The Cocktail Party the self-love of the main characters results in a shrinking of the self, a reduction of the self to a thing, in spite of the covert effort to nourish the self and serve its interests. The movement of each of these characters from his deadly self-love to salvation consists of the kenosis (self-emptying) of turning self-love to the love of others. The final scene of the play shows how Edward and Lavinia have grown in their ability to be concerned about others, and the report of Celia's death reveals her growth to the ultimate expression of altruistic love. The characters in Eliot's play are representative or type characters, but Eliot shows enough particulars of their lives to give the appearance of realistic treatment. Beyond the surface realism, these particulars give some illustration of how the reordering of love might work out in the common life of typical people. The Chamberlaynes offer the modern audience an attainable illustration of the application of a sense of vocation to a perfectly ordinary life. Celia offers an ideal for the more proficient, but she remains far more abstract than Edward and Lavinia. Reilly cannot give Celia any details of the path she is to travel; neither can Eliot give his audience or reader any details of Celia's life, for the saint's life is unique.

CHAPTER III

THE GROWTH OF UNDERSTANDING

The kind of movement to be examined in this chapter is similar to the movement to salvation, which was discussed in the previous chapter, but differs in one very important respect: in the plays depicting growth of some kind, the protagonists are not shown as initially lost, then following a course of development to salvation; the protagonists of these plays are shown as they undergo experiences which contribute to their growth in some significant way, and the question of lostness and salvation has no explicit part in the plays. The difference between the two categories lies in the central question or concern of the plays, or in a difference in the playwright's way of seeing the condition of his protagonist, or of his way of categorizing the meaning of his protagonist's experience.

The first play to be examined here is Archibald MacLeish's J.B.; the second is Dorothy Sayers' Canterbury Festival play, The Zeal of Thy House, and the third is Wolf Mankowitz' It Should Happen to a Dog.

J.B., the protagonist of MacLeish's modern Job story, is an exceedingly wealthy American businessman of the atomic age. He is perhaps the Alger Boy grown up and is at the pinnacle of his success. The central movement of the play takes J. B. through a series of catastrophes that deprive

him of his children, all his property, and finally his wife. The resolution of the play sees him accepting all that has happened, saying that we must have courage and trust in love.

J. B. is a play within a play, but the story of J.B. never becomes wholly detached from the frame play. Zuss and Nickles, masked, play the roles of God and Satan, whose disagreement over the faith of Job provides the impetus for the central movement of the ancient story. They also become deeply involved in J. B.'s experiences and continue their debate between episodes of the story of J. B. Although their debates provide much of the richness of the play, the concerns of this study are centered in the inner development of J. B. himself, as he responds to the movement of a series of catastrophes, with a counter-movement involving faith, bewilderment, anguish, and, finally, faith and love.

J. B. moves from an initial complacency, through a period of suffering, during which he keeps his faith in the justice of God. He does not understand what has happened, but he believes that understanding is possible. The next stage of his movement follows the death of the last child in the bomb blast. Here he begins to search himself, trying to determine what fault of his can be responsible for what God has done to him. Finally, after the visit of the "comforters," J.B. moves to his challenge of God for an explana-

tion. This leads to the recognition scene, in which J.B. accepts both the limitations and the glories of being a man in a vast and largely incomprehensible universe. As we see J.B. in the Thanksgiving dinner scene he is a man who seems to take his prosperity for granted. He ascribes his success to God's being with him, but he doesn't seem self-conscious about his religion, which is expressed mainly in a great zest for life. Sarah expresses it in these words:

> . . . He lies there watching
> Long before I see the light --
> Can't bear to miss a minute of it:
> Sun at morning, moon at night,
> The last red apple, the first peas!
> I've never seen the dish he wouldn't
> Taste and relish and want more of:
> People either![1]

J.B. seems complacent, but not because of self-righteousness. He denies that he deserves all he has:

> Nobody <u>deserves</u> it, Sarah:
> Not the world that God has given us.
> . . .
> But I believe in it, Sal. I trust in it.
> I trust my luck -- my life -- our life --
> God's goodness to me.[2]

The series of calamities, roughly paralleling those of the Book of Job, involves a considerable dramatic movement; it carries J.B. from the pinnacle of good fortune to the lowest point of evil fortune. But the calamities do not

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[1] Archibald MacLeish, J.B. (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), p. 32.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 38.

produce a change of consciousness or attitude on the part of J.B. In spite of all that happens to him, J.B. still trusts in God.

In the first of the calamity scenes, J.B. and Sarah are wholly unprepared for the news of David's death. They do not understand the fumbling efforts of the messengers until one of them finally utters the biblical words, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Incredulous even then, J.B. and Sarah finally accept the fact that David is dead.

When the newsmen brutally exploit their news of the death of Mary and Jonathan, Sarah asks why it happened to them. She wonders what the children had done, and what she and J.B. had done, to bring such retribution. J.B. ascribes it to chance:

> Shall we . . .
> Take the good and not the evil?
> We have to take the chances, Sarah;
> Evil with good.
> It doesn't mean there
> Is no good![1]

Sarah's alienation from J.B. begins at the end of this scene; she cannot accept his acceptance of what has happened to them.

Even the horrible death of little Rebecca does not shake J.B.'s faith in God, though Sarah shows increasing bitterness, especially in the early part of the scene. She

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[1] Ibid., p. 71.

says to the policemen:

> Yes! Yes! Yes!
> We believe in our luck in this house!
> We've earned the right to! We believe in it . . .
> All but the bad![1]

After the policemen have finally revealed the murder of Rebecca, J.B. begins to repeat the words of the biblical Job, "The Lord giveth . . . the Lord taketh away!" He does not finish with the blessing of the name of the Lord. It might be supposed that J.B.'s leaving the formula incomplete reflects a movement in the direction of loss of faith, but Nickles offers an explanation that seems satisfactory, even though he is not at all interested in defending J.B.'s faith in God. Nickles says:

> . . . He's not playing.
> He isn't in the play at all.
> He's where we all are -- in our suffering.[2]

To be overwhelmed by grief is not to show a loss of faith.

When Ruth is killed in the bomb blast, J.B. pleads with Sarah to avoid despair and not let go of his hand. Even in this extremity of suffering, he maintains his faith in God, and now he completes the words of Job, saying, "The Lord giveth. The Lord taketh away." Sarah then bursts out with "Takes! Kills! Kills! Kills! Kills!" J.B. goes on to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 78.

[2] MacLeish, op. cit., p. 84.

[3] Ibid., pp. 89-90.

In scene eight, J.B. suffers patiently, offering tender comfort to Sarah. By now he has shifted his position enough to begin a diligent self-searching, for he thinks he must be at fault. He wonders what wrong he has done, insisting upon the justice of God:

> God will not punish without cause.
> God is just.
> . . .
> Knows the guilt is mine. He must know:
> Has He not punished it?[1]

Unable to accept J.B.'s acceptance of all that has happened, unable to share his continued faith in the justice of God, Sarah leaves J.B., thus depriving him of the last possible source of real human comfort.

The visit of the three "comforters" does not bring J.B. any closer to an understanding of what has happened. The main distinction of his speeches in the dialogue with the "comforters" is that he gains in eloquence to match the high-sounding speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. The arguments of the three men are sometimes interesting, but they do not contribute to J.B.'s growth of understanding, except that they could be considered a factor in his growing impatience for an answer to his agonized questions.

J.B.'s movement to understanding and full acceptance of his lot comes suddenly, as he responds to the challenge

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[1] Ibid., p. 109.

of the "Distant Voice." The correspondence between MacLeish and Elia Kazan[1] makes it clear that revisions in the production of the play made the "recognition scene" come out more strongly than it does in the published version, which is the basis of this study. The production revisions gave J.B. additional lines, in keeping with Kazan's request to MacLeish:

> . . . the one scene the audience must have was that one: the moment when J.B., having accepted his insignificance and impotence in the face of the scale and majesty of the universe, passes from dependence and humbleness to independence and dignity and pride in his own manliness.[2]

The published version of the play gives the first half of the recognition lines to J.B., who speaks in the words of Job:

> I know that thou canst do everything . . .
> And that no thought can be withholden from thee.
> Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?
> Therefore have I uttered that I understood not:
> Things too wonderful for me, which I know not.
> Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: . . .
> I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear . . .
> But now . . .
> mine eyes seeth thee!
> Wherefore
> I abhor myself . . . and repent . . .[3]

The second half of the recognition comes indirectly, as Zuss rages indignantly about J.B.'s behavior:

> Job . . . just . . . sat!
> Sat there!

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[1] "The Staging of a Play," Esquire, (May, 1958), 144-158.

[2] Ibid., p. 157. [3] MacLeish, op. cit., p. 132.

Dumb!
Until it ended!
Then! . . . you heard him!
Then, he calmed me!
Gentled me the way a farmhand
Gentles a bulging, bugling bull!
Forgave me! . . .
for the world! . . .
for everything!
He repented. It was him --
Not the fear of God but him!
. . .
. . . as though Job's sufferings were justified
Not by the will of God but Job's
Acceptance of God's will . . .
. . . In spite of everything he'd suffered!
In spite of all he'd lost and loved
He understood and he forgave it! . . .
. . .
. . . He'd heard of God and now he saw Him!
Who's the judge in judgment there?
Who plays the hero, God or him?
Is God to be forgiven?[1]

J.B.'s movement "from dependence and humbleness to independence and dignity and pride in his own manliness"[2] is shown clearly in these lines, even though they are spoken by Zuss. Referring to J.B.'s recognition, MacLeish wrote to Kazan:

> J.B.'s recognition is a recognition not only of the insignificance of his human place in the vast scale of the universe, but of the significance of that insignificance. He is at least a man. It is his "integrity" as a man (Job's word) that he has been struggling for: . . . Ahead lies the final struggle, the struggle with himself, the struggle to accept life again, which means -- for there is no other way to accept life -- the struggle to accept love, to risk himself again in love.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 138-140. [2] Esquire, May, 1959, p. 157.

[3] Ibid., p. 158.

J.B.'s "final struggle" is at least begun in the closing scene of the play, in which J.B. does "risk himself again in love," thus completing the movement of this play. Following Kazan's suggestion, MacLeish revised the final curtain scene of the play, giving the last lines to J.B., rather than to Sarah, and he changed the lines to make more explicit the primacy of love in J.B.'s new acceptance of life. J.B. says:

> Blow on the coal of the heart, poor Sarah!
> . . .
> The candles in the churches are out,
> The lights have gone out in the sky!
> We <u>are</u>, and what we are can suffer --
> But -- what suffers, loves -- and love
> Will live its suffering again.[1]

Why should a twentieth-century poet have chosen the Book of Job as the basic pattern for a play about his own time? Man has known absurd suffering in every age, not only in the twentieth century. The answer may be found in the nature of the catastrophes which strike the modern Job; unlike those in the biblical book, these are all man-made. It has become almost a cliche of the mid-century that, while modern man has shown immense ingenuity in conquering many of the natural evils that once were a hazard to life and comfort, he has been unable to use the same ingenuity to root out and eliminate human evils. The mystery of undeserved

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[1] <u>J.B.</u> portions printed in <u>Life</u>, May 18, 1959, p. 132.

suffering is essentially the same, whether it arises from natural evils or from the man-made catastrophes of J.B., but, at the mid-point of the twentieth century, man is peculiarly troubled by his own capacity for evil. J.B. must be tested, just as the biblical Job was tested. But J.B. is not being tested by a God who wants to prove a point to a skeptical Satan: he is being tested by a concentration of the evils of his own time. J.B. portrays a man facing the foremost dilemma of the mid-century; how can men keep the courage to affirm life in the midst of the mounting wave of terrors which, paradoxically, is arising partly from man's own efforts to gain increasing control over the various sources of pain and insecurity in life?

Since J.B.'s problem is not essentially an intellectual one, even though he tries initially to face it as such, his movement to a fruitful insight, or to the ability to face and affirm life as meaningful, cannot readily be portrayed as a gradual development. J.B. remains firm in his faith until Sarah's desertion leaves him truly alone. The intellectualism of the "comforters" provides an ironic counterpoint to J.B.'s own efforts to find a rational explanation for his suffering, and neither his agonized cries nor their coldly reasoned replies can bring him any comfort or assurance. The challenge of the "Distant Voice" shocks J.B. into an instantaneous recognition. The movement

of J.B. from that point on to the end is largely a matter of putting the pieces of his life into the right places, in keeping with his new acceptance of, or new insight into, life.

Another part of the movement of this play is the movement of circumstances against J.B., to strip him of all that he values in life. J.B.'s own inner movement may be seen, then, as a counter-movement, affirming his eventual triumph over a series of terrible blows. The frame play, through the involvement of Zuss and Nickles in the sufferings of J.B., emphasizes the tension between the movement of the catastrophes, and the counter-movement of J.B.'s determination to understand the justice of God.

The Zeal of Thy House was written by Dorothy Sayers for the Canterbury Cathedral Festival of 1937. Its protagonist is William of Sens, a master architect who is competing with others for the job of rebuilding the choir of Canterbury Cathedral, after a fire left that portion of the building in ruins. During the course of the play, William comes to a deeper understanding of himself as a sinner and takes a significant step as a result of his new-found understanding. Like J.B., William arrives at his new understanding after passing through a period of suffering. Unlike J.B., William is the cause of his own suffering, since it is his own pride that leads to his downfall.

When he is first introduced in the play, William of Sens is presented in equivocal terms. While his proposal for rebuilding the ruined choir of Canterbury Cathedral seems to reflect thoughtfulness and a concern for integrity of craftsmanship, his competitors for the contract accuse him of using trickery to get the contract. He does not deny the charge, but maintains that he will give the best that is in himself to erect a fine and worthy building. He explains his approach to young Gervase:

> Listen to me, young man. At my age one learns that sometimes one has to damn one's own soul for the sake of his work. Trust me, God shall have a choir fit for His service. Does anything else really matter?[1]

Sayers employs a choir, and sometimes a chorus of angels, to function as a chorus, sometimes foreshadowing action, and sometimes interpreting what has already taken place. After William's declaration to Gervase, the choir sings a long passage concerning the various kinds of craftsmen. Some portions of it follow:

> Every carpenter and workmaster that laboureth night and day, and they that give themselves to counterfeit imagery, and watch to finish a work; . . .
> All these trust to their hands, and every one is wise in his work.
> Without these cannot a city be inhabited, . . .
> They shall not be sought for in public council, nor sit high in the congregation;
> But they will maintain the state of the world, and all their desire is in the work of their craft.[2]

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[1]Dorothy Sayers, "The Zeal of Thy House," I, Marvin Halverson, ed., Religious Drama I (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1957), p. 284.

[2]Ibid.

This all-absorbing concern for the quality of the work is of the greatest importance in the understanding of William. It is his greatest strength as an architect, but it is also his most vulnerable point as a man, as further study of the play will show.

After William has worked at Canterbury for two years, Cassiel, the recording angel, asks Michael what he is to write concerning William. Michael replies:

> A schedule here,
> Long as my sword, crammed full of deadly sins;
> Jugglings with truth, and gross lusts of the body,
> Drink, drabbing, swearing; slothfulness in prayer;
> With a devouring, insolent ambition
> That challenges disaster.[1]

Even though Michael finds William blameworthy in many ways, he finds some real accomplishments to William's credit:

> Six columns, and their aisles, with covering vaults
> From wall to arcading, and from thence again
> To the centre, with the keystones locking them,
> All well and truly laid without a fault.[2]

When Cassiel asks whether William prays, Raphael sets forth a theological doctrine that makes William's devotion to his work tantamount to prayer:

> Behold, he prayeth; not with the lips alone,
> But with the hand and with the cunning brain
> Men worship the Eternal Architect.
> So, when the mouth is dumb, the work shall speak
> And save the workman. True as mason's rule
> and line can make them, the shafted columns rise
> Singing like music; and by day and night

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[1] Ibid., II, p. 286. [2] Ibid.

> The unsleeping arches with perpetual voice
> Proclaim in Heaven, to labour is to pray.[1]

The exposition of William's character continues with a scene in which Gervase, the bookkeeper, is puzzled by a timber merchant's references to a commission. Clearly the merchant is giving William a kickback on his timber contract. Later, the chief mason complains to William about the poor quality of lime the treasurer has bought. William's method of operation is shown in the following passage:

> I wish the Father Treasurer would allow me to know my own job. Tell him -- no, don't tell him anything. Order in a fresh lot from Thomas Clay's as before, instructing him to charge it up at Jocelyn's price, and send me a private note of the difference. We can adjust it on that timber account. . . . If these timber merchants are knaves enough to offer me a five percent commission for giving them the contract and Father Stephen is fool enough to grudge a few pounds extra for first-class material, all right. We play off the knave against the fool, get what we want, and save argument.[2]

All of this expository material establishes the character of William as he is near the beginning of his work on the rebuilding of the choir of Canterbury Cathedral. At the same time, it has prepared for the development of William, which is to begin after his accident. The most important fact about William is the tremendous pride he takes in his craftsmanship.

An important plot complication occurs when a widow,

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[1] Ibid., p. 287.

[2] Ibid., p. 288.

Lady Ursula de Worbois, moves to Canterbury and takes great interest in the new construction at the cathedral. When she and William become lovers, Theodatus is scandalized.

Up to this point, there has been no development on the part of William; the action has served only to reveal his character and to introduce elements needed in the later development of the drama. Now the action takes a turn that produces a major crisis in William's life, which leads to significant growth for him. The crisis comes at a symbolically significant point; William is ready to insert the keystone in the main arch of the new choir. Simon and Theodatus are to examine the rope that is to take William's "travelling cradle" to the top of the arch. While the two churchmen examine the rope, William talks nearby with Lady Ursula. Having heard the scandalized talk of the other churchmen, Simon watches the lovers. Theodatus closes his eyes to pray, because the scandalous activity seems to be a threat to his piety. Distracted, the two overlook a flaw in the rope, so the machinery is prepared for a disaster.

Just before the critical accident, William reveals the extent of his pride as he talks with Lady Ursula:

> We are the master-craftsmen, God and I --
> We understand one another. None, as I can,
> Can creep under the ribs of God, and feel
> His heart beat through those Six Days of Creation;
> . . .
> This Church is mine
> And none but I, not even God, can build it.

> . . . He knows that I am indispensable
> . . .
> The work is all; when that is done, good night --
> My life till then is paramount with God.[1]

Predictably, the rope fails, and William falls to the ground.

William's movement to a new understanding and a new attitude towards himself and his work begins in a scene showing the ill feelings and jealousy that have developed among William's assistants during the time he has been confined to a sickroom. When William finds himself too weak to sit up and sketch some corrections in work Hilary has done wrong because of his unwillingness to accept orders from Hubert, he calls for the Prior. Commenting upon William's condition, the choir sings:

> My days are consumed away like smoke . . .
> Thou hast taken me up and cast me down.[2]

When William makes his confession, the Prior is disturbed that he mentions nothing but sins of the flesh. Since William insists that he knows of no sins of the mind, the Prior admonishes him to pray for greater self-knowledge:

> The Tree of Life
> Grew by the Tree of Knowledge; and when Adam
> Ate of the one, this doom was laid upon him
> Never, but by self-knowledge, to taste life.
> Pray now for grace, that thou may'st know and live.[3]

William's confession represents a substantial movement toward self-knowledge. Formerly he has felt no need to

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[1] Ibid., III, p. 310.

[2] Ibid., IV, p. 325.

[3] Ibid., p. 328.

confess, but his fall from the arch has all but deprived him of his beloved work, and he has had to face himself in a way that he has probably never before found necessary.

William takes the longest step in his movement to self-understanding in a dream or vision of Gabriel, Cassiel, and Michael. Michael tells William he is guilty of a sin that is so much a part of himself that he cannot recognize it as sin. William runs down a list of a dozen or so sins of which he denies significant guilt, but Gabriel insists he is guilty. Michael says:

> There where thy treasure is
> Thy heart is also. Sin is of the heart.

William replies:

> But all my heart was in my work.

Michael responds:

> Even so.[1]

At first responding with anger, William must finally recognize his guilt, but persists for a time in his belief that none other can take up and finish the work he has begun. At length he says:

> O, I have sinned. The eldest sin of all,
> Pride, that struck down the morning star from Heaven
> Hath struck down me from where I sat and shone
> Smiling on my new world.[2]

The movement of William to self-understanding and repentance is now complete, and all that remains is for him to act

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[1] Ibid., IV, p. 331. [2] Ibid., p. 335.

according to his new understanding and turn over his beloved work to another master architect. William's final recognition is expressed thus:

> I am not
> The only architect in the world -- there are others
> Will do the work as well, better perhaps.
> . . .
> As for me,
> My place is here no more. I am in God's hand.[1]

The shape of the movement of The Zeal of Thy House is very different from that of J.B. In J.B. there is a very brief rising action, followed by a prolonged, episodic falling action, after which there is a sharp fall and an abrupt rise to the high point of the conclusion. The Zeal of Thy House has a very long rising action, a very steep falling action, a levelling off, and a sharp rise to the conclusion. The last play to be examined in this chapter, Wolf Mankowitz' It Should Happen to a Dog, blends action with character exposition all the way to the end of a very short play, and suddenly gives the protagonist, Jonah B. Amittai, a flash of insight, in which he gets a new perspective on all that has happened to him.

It Should Happen to a Dog is a retelling, in the idiom of the twentieth century, of the story of Jonah. Jonah ben Amittai, whose speech resembles that of the burlesque stage Jew, is an ex-travelling salesman who has just settled down to a small shop after having covered the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 337-338.

eastern Mediterranean area for about thirty years. Jonah has no sooner gotten settled into his little business than God begins to call him to go and cry against Nineveh.

The play opens just after God has called Jonah to go and cry against Nineveh. Jonah feels very much put upon, and he speaks bluntly to God, then turns to engage the sympathy of the audience:

> Please, please, what do you want from my life? (turns to audience) He won't leave me alone. All these years I've been running -- a traveller . . . Ask them in Tarshish, ask them in Aleppo, in Carthage, even; . . . regular call once a month for more than thirty years. . . . Now at last I'm tired. I get this good pitch here -- at last -- so I shouldn't have to run with a suitcase any more. And still he nags me. All right. I heard. I'm going. What happens to me shouldn't happen to a dog.[1]

The biblical Jonah does not offer reasons for trying to evade God's call, so it is easy to take an attitude of aloofness from him and to condemn his foolishness and disobedience. This modern Jonah gives very plausible reasons for not wanting to go to Nineveh and cry against it. This revision of the old story makes Jonah more a person than an abstraction, and so makes him a far more sympathetic character than the original.

Although the play takes many liberties with the events and the dialogue of the Book of Jonah, it is faithful

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[1]Wolf Mankowitz, "It Should Happen to a Dog," Religious Drama 3, Marvin Halverson, ed. (Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, 1959), p. 125.

to the general outline of the book and seems to be making the same point, namely, the universality of God's concern for mankind. Mankowitz adds one point by way of conclusion, and it is here that Jonah B. Amittai moves to a deeper insight into the meaning of his life. As Jonah nurses his injured pride, watching the celebration of the repentant and saved city, an angel appears and begins to talk with him. After the angel has delivered the message about the power and freedom of God to create and destroy trees at will and has pointed out that God feels compassion for the people of Nineveh, just as Jonah feels regret for the death of a beautiful tree, Jonah begins to question him about the purpose of his taking all the trouble to come and cry against Nineveh:

Jonah: Then what does he want of my life? What's the point of all this expensive business with whales and palm trees and so on?

Angel: You mankind, you can't see no further than your nose.

Jonah: So what's the answer?

Angel: You see -- (long pause) frankly, I don't know.

Jonah: It should happen to a dog.

Angel: Me too. After all, it's no joke following you or any other prophet . . . around the whole time. . . . It should happen to a dog.

Jonah: On the other hand, come to think of it, whose dogs are we?

Angel: We are the dogs of God.

Jonah: So . . .

Angel: Nu?

Jonah: Whatever happens to a dog . . .

Angel: . . . must happen to us, eh?
(He chuckles with admiration.)[1]

This portrayal of Jonah shows, as has been said earlier, very little movement; Jonah's final insight amounts to a sudden illumination, a movement to understanding in one step. No doubt the author hopes to create a similar movement in the audiences who see his play.

Mankowitz' Jonah struggles with the tensions experienced by twentieth-century Western man as he attempts to balance his desire for a comfortable private life, free from excessive pressures, with the increasing urgency of his involvement in public affairs at all levels. J. B. Amittai has retired to a "nice pitch" and wants nothing more than to be left at peace with his little business. But God has urgent business to be done in the world, and he prods Jonah until he submits to God's will. Jonah does obey God, but he still lacks the self-emptying which makes service complete. It is Wolf Mankowitz' contribution to the old story that makes Jonah relevant to our times, for it is becoming increasingly clear that those who would serve others,

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[1] Ibid., p. 135.

whether in the name of God or in the name of humanity, must empty themselves enough to subordinate personal and national interests to the service they do. These comments are not intended as a sermon, but are an attempt to explain why a writer should have chosen to revive the story of Jonah, and why he made the particular changes he made in the biblical account of the reluctant prophet.

The protagonists of all three plays studied in this chapter move through a series of experiences to a sudden insight. Each of them is moved to the point of recognition by suffering or distress, ranging from the extreme agony of J.B. to the inconvenience of Jonah B. Amittai. The relative intensity of the suffering is not necessarily directly related to its importance in the themes of the plays.

The disasters which strike J.B. and his family are all absurd, and yet all are man-made. J.B. is not personally responsible for any of them, and yet all have implications of social responsibility. J.B.'s affirmation of the worth of love and of life, coming as it does after a series of absurd, man-made disasters, is far from being the inane "Gloryosky, Zero!" of a trouble-ridden Little Annie Rooney; it is an affirmation that arises from despair. J.B. is not expecting the lights to be rekindled; he does not think that he has seen the end of his suffering. What he does affirm is that man can prevail, and that is precisely what multi-

tudes have ceased to believe in the middle of this century.

The Zeal of Thy House deals with the deeply personal problem of excessive pride, which gives the play a perennial relevance, even though it is not as sharply relevant to this century as J.B. William of Sens represents the excessive pride of human creativity which has typified the century that can hurl men into orbit around the earth, but cannot find a way to lift millions above the level of bare survival. His recognition that others can create as well as he, and perhaps even better, changes William's perspective on his own place in the larger scheme of life. The play may be viewed as simply an occasional play, dealing with a traditional Christian theme, but the pride of creation is potentially a very serious problem in this century.

The whining petulance of J. B. Amittai seems hardly deserving of treatment in the same chapter with the noble suffering of J.B., yet his attitude is typical of large numbers of people who feel that modern life is too demanding and want only to be left alone. Only the recognition that he belongs to God can persuade this modern Jonah to accept with good grace the responsibility of leaving his "nice pitch" to go and preach judgment to a people he doesn't even know. The meaning of this play in the middle of the twentieth century is too obvious to require comment.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAY OF THE MARTYR

This chapter covers three plays on the theme of martyrdom. Each of them has some distinctive features, apart from the particulars of characters, plot, time, and place. Major attention is given to Rolf Hochhuth's The Deputy. Those being treated in summary fashion are Claudel's The Tidings Brought to Mary, and Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral. The Deputy was chosen for major treatment because of the recency of the events it dramatizes, and because it deals with problems of corporate responsibility and individual moral responsibility which are among the most difficult and pervasive problems of our time.

Of the many critics who have dealt with Hochhuth's The Deputy, few have given much attention to anything but the controversial thesis of the play: that Pope Pius XII failed to fulfill his responsibilities as the world's most influential spiritual leader when he remained silent in the face of Nazi Germany's systematic murder of several millions of Europe's Jews during World War II. Important and provocative as that thesis may be, it is not relevant per se to this study, since we are here primarily concerned with the movement of Father Riccardo Fontana to martyrdom.

While The Deputy is strongly polemical, the object of

the playwright's attack -- the silence of the Pope -- serves dramatically as the driving force in a play "whose main action is a spiritual one; the decision formed in the soul of the young Jesuit priest, Riccardo Fontana."[1] Riccardo Fontana begins his martyr's progress on his first day of service at the Papal legation in Berlin. As the Nuncio tells him about the deportations of Jews and points out to him that not a single synagogue remains in Berlin, Riccardo asks whether the Nuncio might not protest to the German officials. He shows concern, but not agitation, as the Nuncio goes on to speak of the reliable reports that hundreds of thousands of Jews have been killed in Poland. At this point in the play Riccardo is disturbed by the slaughter of the Jews, but he has not yet fully grasped the profundity of the evil that is responsible for the killings. He assumes that a few protests by bishops and nuncios will suffice to convince the Nazis that they must not antagonize the Church by going against her wishes. Perhaps his Jesuit background is supposed to have conditioned him to rely upon the power of logic to prevail in disputes.

Riccardo is held in horrified fascination when Kurt Gerstein bursts into the legation to give his report on the

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[1]Lionel Abel, "Rolf Hochhuth's The Deputy," in The Storm Over The Deputy, Eric Bentley, ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 82.

gassing operations in Poland. The Nuncio has spoken in abstractions -- mere statistics -- but Gerstein speaks of human beings:

> I see it all the time -- it haunts
> me right to this room.
> . . .
> In Belzec recently I had to watch --
> this was on August 20 --
> while the victims waited two hours and forty-nine minutes
> until the gas came on.
> . . .
> Like marble columns the naked corpses stand.
> You can tell the families, even after death
> convulsed in locked embrace -- with hooks
> they're pulled apart. Jews have to do that job.[1]

The next day Riccardo calls at Gerstein's apartment and tells him that the Vatican will surely issue a formal protest on behalf of the Jews. While Gerstein does not share Riccardo's confidence that the Pope will act, he is impressed by Riccardo's sincere concern that something be done for the victims of Hitler's "Final Solution" of the Jewish problem, so he tells Riccardo of his hazardous work as a "spy of God" within the SS. After hearing how Gerstein works to slow down and even stop the execution of orders that will result in suffering or death for others, Riccardo suggests that it must cause Gerstein a terrible struggle with his conscience to disobey orders as he does. But Gerstein replies:

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[1]Rolf Hochhuth, The Deputy (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), pp. 24-25.

> I must disillusion you, Father.
> There was no terrible ordeal,
> no pangs of conscience, none at all.
> Hitler himself has written: the rights of men
> invalidate the rights of states. Therefore:
> oath or not, a man who sets up factories
> which serve no other purpose but
> to kill his fellowman with gas --
> this man must be betrayed,
> must be destroyed, no matter what the cost![1]

Gerstein's disobedience to his military superiors is paralleled by Riccardo's disobedience to the Pope, so that Gerstein appears to be a strong influence on Riccardo.

Having pledged himself to see that the Vatican will take some action on behalf of the Jews, Riccardo takes a minor risk for one Jew, a young man Gerstein has been sheltering. Riccardo gives his cassock and passport to Jacobsen, so that the young Jew may have a chance to cross the Brenner Pass to freedom. Taking Jacobsen's clothing and passport, Riccardo risks being picked up as a Jew before he can get back to the Papal legation. Riccardo symbolizes this earnest of his martyrdom by holding the yellow Star of David over his breast, asking "Here?" Riccardo has grown significantly, moving from his original ignorance and passivity to knowledge and concern. Indeed, he has taken the first steps of involvement.

His visit to a monastery where many Jews and other refugees from Hitler's forces are being sheltered gives

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[1] Ibid., p. 151.

Riccardo a firsthand look at the quiet rescue work the Church is doing in the midst of the German occupation. The Cardinal, who is visiting the Father General of the monastery when Riccardo arrives, expects the young man to be satisfied that the Church is doing all it can to relieve the plight of the Jews. But Riccardo is bent on all-out action and cannot be satisfied with what he sees as a token effort, the very least the Church could be expected to do. He says to the Cardinal:

> Your Eminence, these are the lucky few,
> a handful among millions, who reach the gate
> of a monastery. And if the Pope
> grants them a hiding place, he only does
> what many private persons in Berlin, in Amsterdam,
> in Paris and in Brussels, are doing for
> the persecuted. But, your Eminence,
> the doctor or the businessman,
> the workingman who gives asylum to a Jew,
> risks beheading. What does the Pope risk?[1]

This scene shows that Riccardo has developed a deeper concern than the scene in Gerstein's apartment revealed. Both in this scene, and in the earlier one with the Cardinal in the Fontana home, he has encountered an official unwillingness to take open steps to oppose Hitler's policy of exterminating the Jews. Now he dares to dispute his superiors.

Riccardo's concern for the Jews carries him still further as he discusses with the Abbot the possibility of

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[1] Ibid.

the Pope's refusing to issue a firm protest to the Hitler government. When the Abbot tells him that they must, in any case, obey the Pope, Riccardo points to Gerstein and says that he, an officer in the SS, is disobedient, continually breaking his oath as a German officer, and that if he were not doing so, he would be a murderer. He goes on, "And what about us?"[1] Riccardo's appeal to Gerstein's example justifies the belief that this "spy of God," as Gerstein has been called, is a lay counterpart of Riccardo, and that his dedication to undermining the work of the SS, at great peril to his own life, provides much of the inspiration for Riccardo.[2]

Later in his conversation with the Abbot, Riccardo completes the rationale for his disobedience and martyrdom, should it become necessary. He alludes to a famous passage in Genesis:

> Please, Father General, tell me this:
> If God once promised Abraham that he
> would not destroy Sodom if only
> ten righteous souls lived there --
> do you think, Reverend Father,
> that God might still forgive the Church
> if even a very few of her servants --
> like Lichtenberg --
> stand by the persecuted?
> . . .
> You see as well as I, Father General.
> You must see that the silence of the Pope
> in favor of the murderers imposes

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[1] Ibid., p. 153.

[2] John Simon, "The Deputy and its Metamorphoses," in Bentley, op. cit., p. 113.

> a guilt upon the Church for which we must atone.
> And since the Pope, although only a man,
> can actually represent God on earth,
> I . . . a poor priest . . . if need be
> can also represent the Pope -- there
> where the Pope ought to be standing today.[1]

Riccardo's coming martyrdom is to be an act of expiation for the guilt of the Church. He is powerless to stop the gassing of the Jews, and he is powerless to make an official protest, but he can go along with the victims; he can help to preserve the integrity of the Church.

The audience with the Pope destroys Riccardo's hopes that the Pope will protest. In the face of Count Fontana's insistence that something must be done, the Pope dictates a high-sounding, innocuous proclamation of the Pope's concern for all people who suffer because of the war. He says nothing about the gassings; in fact, he does not mention the Jews at all.

By now, Riccardo understands that the Pope will do nothing against Hitler's slaughter of the Jews. As the Pope prepares to sign the proclamation, Riccardo signals his intention to become a martyr, by pinning the yellow Star of David to his cassock. Speaking to the Pope, who fumbles his pen and smears ink on his hand, Riccardo says:

> Your Holiness, what you have set your hand to
> grants Hitler unrestricted license to go on
> treating the Jews as he has always done.
> . . .

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[1]Hochhuth, op. cit., pp. 155-156.

> This star which every Jew must wear
> as soon as he is six years old,
> to show he is an outlaw -- I shall wear it too
> until . . .
> . . .
> I shall wear this star until
> Your Holiness proclaims before the world
> a curse upon the man who slaughters
> Europe's Jews like cattle.[1]

As the Pope is about to begin washing the ink from his hand, Riccardo says:

> God shall not destroy His Church
> only because a Pope shrinks from His summons.[2]

Riccardo then walks out to take his place among the Jews of Rome, while the Pope resumes his throne and washes his hands. This hand-washing, so obviously contrived, reinforces the image of Christ in Riccardo, since, like Christ, he goes out to meet his expiatory death, while the official who has allowed him to be martyred washes his hands.

The stereotype of the martyr has him marching steadfastly, head held high, into the teeth of a horrible death, perhaps uttering a highly quotable affirmation of faith triumphant. Riccardo starts out very much in that pattern, bravely disputing the Pope, and finally disobeying him flatly. But his arrival at Auschwitz begins a new phase of his martyrdom, a purgatorial experience which burns out all vestiges of the storybook martyr, leaving Riccardo prey to doubts and fears which nearly destroy his resolve to accept

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[1] Ibid., pp. 217-218.

[2] Ibid., p. 220.

martyrdom.

The Doctor attempts to reverse Riccardo's growth towards martyrdom. Riccardo's faith is a challenge to him, and he delights in the thought of burning out this man's belief in God, then sending him to a meaningless death. His plan of "theological education" consists of sending the priest to work in the crematorium. The effectiveness of his plan can be seen a week later, when Gerstein comes with spurious orders for Riccardo's release. Riccardo says to Gerstein:

> I can't go on.
> I've already told myself a hundred times
> that it was sheer presumption to come here.
> I can't bear it, I can't bear it.
> For the past week
> I have been burning the dead ten hours a day.
> And with every human body that I burn
> a portion of my faith burns also.
> God burns.[1]

When Gerstein tells him that he must survive, go on living somewhere, Riccardo replies:

> Live? No one can
> come back from here to go on living.
> . . .
> I came here with a mission; that must sustain me.
> Whether it's meaningful, I'm no longer sure.
> I do not know. But if it's not,
> my life, too, is no longer meaningful.
> Let me be.[2]

Riccardo's work in the crematorium has pushed him towards the edge of despair. He is no longer sure his martyrdom

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[1] Ibid., p. 270.

[2] Ibid., p. 271.

will have the meaning he purposed, for Auschwitz has posed a radical challenge to his entire value system; consequently, if his martyrdom is without meaning, continued life is also meaningless. There is no longer any acceptable alternative to martyrdom. Having made his choice, Riccardo accepts all the consequences of his choice, including the threat of absurdity. In this he resembles an Existentialist hero, such as the Orestes of Sartre's The Flies.

This near-despair of Riccardo, together with his attempted shooting of the Doctor, might appear to flaw his martyrdom, but it does not. It would be naive to expect a man to spend a week in burning the corpses of his brother men, then walk serenely to a martyr's death as though he were playing a role in a Sunday school drama. The attempted shooting follows immediately after the Doctor's gratuitously cruel shooting of Carlotta, an act revealing such complete depravity that the impulse to shoot the Doctor cannot be considered injurious to Riccardo's status as a martyr.

Although The Deputy is a very long play, the central movement, that of Riccardo Fontana from ignorant detachment to passionate involvement and martyrdom, is simple. There are three forces which move Riccardo to martyrdom: his growing knowledge of the systematic murder of the Jews, the Pope's refusal to act on behalf of the Jews, and the inspiration of Kurt Gerstein's example. The movement is one of

growing knowledge, growing concern, and growing determination to act.

Riccardo's is not a simple martyrdom; since he hopes to give his life as a vicarious sacrifice for the forgiveness of the Church, he is a self-made scapegoat as well as a martyr. He differs from the usual scapegoat in that he chooses the role for himself and is conscious at all times of what forces are moving him to his sacrifice. The voluntary, self-conscious nature of his act makes him primarily a martyr; the motivation of his act makes him a scapegoat.

It seems significant that Hochhuth chose to make Riccardo a martyr-scapegoat, rather than simply a martyr. Perhaps it was necessary for Hochhuth, as an ex-member of the Hitler Youth, to do something to unburden himself of his share of the guilt for Hitler's murder of six million Jews. Though he is based upon two German priests, Riccardo is Hochhuth's own creation, and it is possible that Riccardo's death is Hochhuth's act of expiation. To the degree that the people of other nations share the guilt for the death of those millions of Jews, Riccardo becomes a scapegoat for everyman. Kay M. Baxter has pointed out that the production of <u>The Diary of Anne Frank</u> in Berlin, and "even the impressively staged trial of Eichmann in Israel in 1962 was linked with the human need for an externalization of guilt-feeling,

the need for an expiatory rite."[1]

The title of Paul Claudel's The Tidings Brought to Mary is an allusion to the annunciation to Mary, as found in the first chapter of the Book of Luke. Mary's ready and humble acceptance of her divinely appointed role is the implicit pattern for young Violaine, who exemplifies the meaning of the play.

The meaning of the play is expressed in the prologue. Wallace Fowlie put it in these words:

> This opening dialogue contains the whole meaning of the text and what lies beyond the text, because it analyzes the secret role that every Christian is called upon to play in the world -- the role of pilgrim, the one who accepts the idea of separation.[2]

The six main characters can be grouped in three pairs of opposites: Violaine and her sister Mara; Pierre de Craon and Jacques Hury; Anne Vercors and his wife. Each pair consists of one who accepts the vocation of pilgrim, and one who is earthbound, essentially unspiritual. The body of the play shows the meaning implicit in the relationships of all these characters, as each one lives out the implications of his own vision of the meaning of life.

Since each of the characters has achieved his devel-

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[1]Kay M. Baxter, Contemporary Theatre and the Christian Faith (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 43.

[2]Wallace Fowlie, Dionysus in Paris (New York: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, 1960), p. 130.

opment by the time he appears on stage, the movement of this play is not that of development, but of illustration. In the words of Jacques Guicharnaud, "Every one of Claudel's plays is a parable meant to illustrate concretely a lesson given in advance."[1]

The prologue shows how Pierre de Craon has given up all thoughts of human love, since his abortive effort to force himself upon Violaine, and has given himself wholly to his vocation as builder of churches. Violaine's opening of the long-unused back doors of the barn, and her pointing out the road to Pierre, may symbolize her part in showing Pierre the way to his vocation, even though the opening of the doors takes place a year after his attempt at seduction. Pierre still loves Violaine, but he has resigned himself to the lonely life of an architect:

> O little soul, was it possible that I should see you
> and not love you?
> . . .
> And who is he who loves and does not desire all?
> . . .
> O image of eternal beauty, thou art not for me!
> . . .
> Another takes from you that which was for me.
> . . .
> This church alone will be my
> wife, drawn from my side like an Eve of stone,
> in the slumber of pain.
> May I soon feel my great structure rising under me,
> and lay my hand on this indestructible thing I

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[1]Jacques Guicharnaud, Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Beckett (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 71.

> have made, whose parts hold firmly together,
> this solid work which I have constructed of
> strong stone that the Holy Sacrament may be
> placed there, my work that God inhabits![1]

The lines expressing his feeling for Violaine show how much Pierre has sacrificed in order to accept his vocation, but he seems to be content with his lot, and he takes pride in the importance of his work.

The prologue shows how Violaine gets the call of God through Pierre de Craon. David Grossvogel quoted Jacques Madaule, who called Pierre de Craon "the messenger of God."[2] This suggests the similarity of the role of Pierre to that of the angel (messenger) Gabriel, who delivered the annunciation to Mary. Violaine does not respond to the call as readily as did Mary, but offers objections. Using the metaphor of the mason's selection of building materials, Pierre says to Violaine:

> I know the good stone under the juniper trees, and
> the good wood like a master woodpecker;
> In the same way, men and women.
> . . .
> Blessed be thou in thy pure heart!
> Holiness is not to get oneself stoned by the Turks,
> or to kiss a leper on the mouth,
> but to obey promptly God's commands.
> Whether it be

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[1]Paul Claudel, "The Tidings Brought to Mary," in Treasury of the Theatre, Ibsen to Ionesco, Third College Edition, John Gassner, ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), pp. 1142-1143.

[2]David I. Grossvogel, 20th Century French Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 117.

To stay where we are, or to ascend higher.[1]

Later, to confirm and console Pierre in his own vocation, Violaine uses a metaphor of kenosis (self-emptying) which fits her own vocation as martyr:

> Be a man, Pierre! Be worthy of the
> flame which consumes you!
> And if one must be consumed, let it be like the
> Paschal candle, flaming on its golden candelabrum
> in the midst of the choir for the glory
> of all the Church![2]

The image of the burning candle is strongly evocative of the way Violaine is being called to empty herself of all personal goals and to be consumed for the glory of God. As to Pierre, the image represents both the fire of his craving for Violaine and the way in which he must turn his energies to the service of God. Since the Paschal candle represents Christ, the metaphor gains still another level of meaning, through the implicit comparison of the personal sacrifices of Violaine and Pierre to that of Christ.

The role of Violaine is reinforced by that of Pierre de Craon, especially as we see him in the prologue, in his role as "messenger," and as a fellow figure of self-emptying and service. The kiss that ends the prologue is a sign of separation for Violaine and Pierre, as far as daily life is concerned. At the same time, it is a sign of their oneness

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[1] Claudel, op. cit., in Gassner, op. cit., p. 1141.

[2] Ibid., p. 1142.

in self-sacrifice.

The decision of Anne Vercors to leave his family and his beloved Combernon in order to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem identifies him as another of those who recognize the obligation of Christians to sacrifice personal goals for a higher goal.

His wife, who measures everything in practical terms, does not understand what drives him to go on his pilgrimage. She offers many objections, ending with this:

> Who knows but that we shall need you here?

He replies in words that reflect his vocation:

> Who knows but that I am needed elsewhere?
> Everything is shaking; who knows but that I obstruct
> God's plan by remaining here
> Where the need there was of me is past?[1]

Leaving the farm in the hands of young Jacques Hury, Vercors tries to explain to the young man the spiritual unity of all creation, especially as it relates to the farm:

> For everything is of God, and those who live in Him
> reap without ceasing the fruits of their works
> . . .
> The earth cleaves to the sky, the body to the spirit,
> all things that He has created are in communion,
> all have need of one another.
> Take the handles of the plough in my stead, that the
> earth may bring forth bread as God himself
> has wished.[2]

Anne Vercors has always regarded his farming as a sacred calling, as the above lines indicate. His pilgrimage

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[1] Ibid., I, i, p. 1146. [2] Ibid., I, iii, p. 1148.

is the extreme step of self-emptying for a greater service. He hopes to find the key to an even larger unity than what he has known in tilling the soil of his "sacred fief" of Combernon. He speaks of being drawn to the hole in which the Cross was set:

> Behold how it draws everything to itself.
> There is the stitch which cannot be undone, the knot which cannot be untied,
> The heritage of all, the interior boundary stone that can never be uprooted,
> The centre and the navel of the world, the element by which all humanity is held together.[1]

His departure on the pilgrimage is like the kiss between Violaine and Pierre de Craon: while it separates Anne Vercors from all the members of his family, as the kiss separated Violaine and Pierre, it unites Anne with his daughter Violaine in a common vocation, the service of God. Anne Vercors and Pieere de Craon serve to reinforce the figure of Violaine as the ideal of devotion to profoundly spiritual goals, involving a complete self-emptying.

The revivification of Mara's child, occurring as it does on Christmas, symbolizes the fruition of Violaine's life of renunciation. Significantly, the act coincides with the coronation, by Joan of Arc, of the Dauphin at Rheims. Since the play contains numerous references to the disordering of all things political and religious, and to the consequent sufferings of the people of France, this political

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[1] Ibid., I, i, p. 1146.

event no doubt suggests the beginnings of a restoration of order. After his return, Anne Vercors says:

> . . .
> my daughter is dead, the holy Maid
> Has been burned and thrown to the winds, not one
> of her bones remains on the earth.
> But the King and the Pope have been given back
> again to France and to the whole world.
> The schism comes to an end, and once more the
> Throne rises above all men.[1]

The coincidence of these events with the revivification of the child suggests that the self-sacrifice of the individual is not simply a spiritual exercise, but may well have far-reaching effects in the world.

Violaine's martyrdom is the intense suffering, both spiritual and physical, that she endures as a result of her renunciation of the normal human goals. It is difficult to describe exactly what her suffering is supposed to accomplish, because her service is not directed to a simple, well-defined goal, such as missionary service or something of the kind. The political turmoil of the 100 Years War and the "Babylonian Captivity" of the Pope are sources of suffering and disunity, and there are strong hints in the final scenes that her devotion to the spiritual life is at least partially responsible for the restoration of order. What is truly clear is that Violaine is the leading example in the play of those whose vision of the meaning of life can be

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[1] Ibid., IV, v, p. 1172.

expressed in the words of Anne Vercors:

> What is the worth of the world compared to life?
> and what is the worth of life if not to be given?[1]

T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral is a play whose movement has a double focus. The central action is the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, but since the play begins so near to the climax there is little movement in the person of Thomas. Much of the movement of the play takes place in the perceptions and reactions of the chorus of women. Helen Gardner explained the importance of the chorus in the following words:

> The real drama of the play is to be found in fact where its greatest poetry lies -- in the choruses. The change which is the life of drama is there: from the terror of the supernatural expressed at the opening to the rapturous recognition of the "glory displayed in all the creatures of the earth" in the last. The fluctuations of the chorus are the true measure of Thomas's spiritual condition.[2]

The course of Thomas' martyrdom is marked by a series of parallels to the passion and death of Jesus Christ, which parallels stress the ritual nature of the death of Thomas.

As the play opens, the chorus shows an almost instinctive awareness that something significant is about to happen:

> Some presage of an act
> Which our eyes are compelled to witness, has forced
> our feet

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[1] Ibid., IV, v, p. 1173.

[2] Helen Gardner, The Art of T.S. Eliot (New York: E. P. Dutton Inc., 1950), p. 136.

Towards the cathedral. We are forced to bear witness.[1] After the messenger has brought the news of the arrival of Thomas in England, the sense of some impending event turns to fear of what may happen because of the return of Thomas. His return could mean trouble for them, and they would prefer to keep things as they are, unsatisfactory as conditions may be, rather than risk the serious disturbance of their lives. They say:

> We do not wish anything to happen.
> Seven years we have lived quietly,
> Succeeded in avoiding notice,
> Living and partly living.[2]

The messenger's account of the Archbishop's coming is an obvious parallel, in some detail, of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, at the beginning of his final week of life:

> He comes in pride and sorrow, affirming all his claims,
> Assured, beyond doubt, of the devotion of the people,
> Who receive him with scenes of frenzied enthusiasm,
> Lining the road and throwing down their capes,
> Strewing the way with leaves and late flowers of the season.[3]

When Thomas finally appears, his opening speeches show that he is ready for a martyr's death. His first speech deals with the action-suffering motif, which indicates the yielding of his will to the will of God. Line

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[1] T. S. Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), I, p. 11.

[2] Ibid., p. 19.

[3] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

four of the following speech reiterates that his death will come as the result of the will of God; the speech also anticipates the coming of temptations:

> For a little time the hungry hawk
> Will only soar and hover, circling lower,
> Waiting excuse, pretence, opportunity.
> End will be simple, God-given.
> Meanwhile the substance of our first act
> Will be shadows, and the strife with shadows.
> Heavier the interval than the consummation.
> All things prepare the event. Watch.[1]

The word "Watch" is a clear allusion to Mark's account of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, when he asked Peter, James, and John to "remain here and watch" while he prayed. The word has a literal function in the play, alerting the priests to the danger from agents of the Kings. On the level of allusion, it is another of the parallels between the experience of Thomas and that of Jesus.

Even through most of the temptation sequence there is no real movement on the part of Thomas. The function of the first three Tempters was admirably expressed by Denis Donoghue:

> It is important to note that the main function of the first three Tempters is not so much to influence the Archbishop's future behaviour as to provide a summary of his past; . . . There is no question of Thomas's yielding to any of the three; their real function is to show to what extent he has been susceptible to the attractions they represent.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 23.

[2] Denis Donoghue, The Third Voice (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 85.

There is a certain change or clarification in the consciousness of Thomas during his exchange with the fourth Tempter. His surprise at the fourth visitant's arrival shows that he has not yet recognized or grappled with the spiritual problem which now arises. At first he is chagrined; but finally he rejects this temptation and remains firm in his resolve to make his will one with the will of God. The following lines illustrate his initial chagrin, then his resolution of the temptation:

> Is there no way, in my soul's sickness,
> Does not lead to damnation in pride?
> . . .
> Can sinful pride be driven out
> Only by more sinful? Can I neither act nor suffer
> Without perdition?
> . . .
> Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain:
> Temptation shall not come in this kind again.
> The last temptation is the greatest treason:
> To do the right deed for the wrong reason.[1]

The problem of the fourth temptation is essentially a double-bind; Thomas cannot make his martyrdom a satisfactory offering to God unless he can make his will one with that of God, and the only way he can do so is by the exercise of his own will on the problem. Precisely how he deals with the double-bind is not clear; he tells us that he has overthrown the temptation, and we must accept him at his word.

The temptations are a useful device for dramatizing the past struggles of the Archbishop with the various

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[1]Eliot, op. cit., pp. 40, 44.

allurements of what he has cast aside in his resolution to become a martyr. They also serve as a major parallel of Thomas with Christ.

Near the end of the temptation sequence the chorus comes in again, evoking the atmosphere of coming violence:

> What is the sickly smell, the vapour? The dark green light from a cloud on a withered tree? The earth is heaving to parturition of issue of hell. What is the sticky dew that forms on the back of my hand?[1]

Again they appeal to Thomas to save himself, that they may be saved. For Thomas to persist in his defiance of the King is a threat to the order of things, unsatisfactory as that order may be. The people have suffered oppression, but they have at least known what to expect, and they have been able to go on "living and partly living." They cry out to Thomas:

> O Thomas, Archbishop, save us, save us, save yourself
> that we may be saved;
> Destroy yourself and we are destroyed.[2]

The chorus has not yet come to understand and accept the necessity of the impending murder of Thomas. It has expressed the reactions of ordinary people to what is developing, and it has provided atmosphere, but it has not shown a change of attitude.

The Christmas sermon gives Thomas an opportunity to explain his coming martyrdom. It summarizes and underscores the results of Thomas' struggle with the fourth Tempter,

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[1] Ibid., p. 41.

[2] Ibid., p. 44.

emphasizing that martyrdom is always "the design of god," and drawing the parallel between all martyrs and Jesus Christ.

The opening chorus of the second part anticipates the redemption that results from martyrdom:

> And war among men defiles this world, but death in the Lord renews it,
> And the world must be cleaned in the winter, or we shall have only
> A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest.[1]

The first entry of the knights does not produce any movement for Thomas. It shows the bestial violence of these men and provides some exposition concerning the dispute between Thomas and the King, which is the cause of the coming martyrdom.

The chorus reacts to the coming murder with its first real movement. It now begins to sense its share of guilt for the coming death. They still lack the ability to accept the murder as the will of God. Common guilt is suggested by the following lines:

> Have I not known, not known
> What was coming to be? It was here, in the kitchen, in the passage,
> In the mews in the barn in the byre in the market place
> In our veins our bowels our skulls as well
>
> As well as in the plottings of potentates
> As well as in the consultations of powers.
> . . .
> I have smelt them, the death-bringers; now is too late
> For action, too soon for contrition.[2]

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[1] Ibid., II, pp. 53-54. [2] Ibid., p. 68.

When the knights return to murder Thomas, he completes the series of parallels between his own death and that of Christ. He says, "Now is the triumph of the Cross,"[1] and then goes on in another speech to speak of blood, which further identifies his death as a ritual act:

> This is the sign of the Church always,
> The sign of blood, Blood for blood.
> His blood to buy my life,
> My blood given to pay for His death,
> My death for His death.[2]

After the killing, the chorus expresses its horror at the defiling of the world by this act of violence:

> Clear the air! Clean the sky! wash the wind! take stone from stone and wash them.
> The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood.
> . . .
> We did not wish anything to happen.
> We understood the private catastrophe,
> The personal loss, the general misery,
> Living and partly living:
> . . .
> But this, this is out of life, this is out of time,
> An instant eternity of evil and wrong.
> We are soiled by a filth that we cannot clean, united to supernatural vermin,
> It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city that is defiled,
> But the world that is wholly foul.[3]

The lines above do more than express horror and a sense of guilt; they recapitulate the earlier attitude of the chorus, its reluctance to see the familiar order of things disrupted, even though the order of things was oppressive, permitting

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[1] Ibid., p. 74. [2] Ibid., p. 75. [3] Ibid., pp. 76-78.

them only a partial life. At least they had known what to expect from the kind of life they lived. The murder has defiled all things, in much the same way as the murder of a king in a play of Shakespeare causes a disruption of the natural order.

The chorus takes a final step of growth in its closing hymn of praise and thanks to god. At last they accept the death of Thomas as an expression of the will of God:

> We thank Thee for Thy mercies of blood, for Thy redemption by blood. For the blood of Thy martyrs and saints
> Shall enrich the earth, shall create the holy places.[1]

This account shows that there is very little movement in Murder in the Cathedral, primarily because the play begins so near the climax that most of the significant movement has already taken place. All that remains for the time covered by the action is for Thomas to deal with the unexpected temptation, and for the chorus to recognize that it shares in the guilt for Thomas' martyrdom, and to accept his death as the will of God.

While there are obvious differences between the three martyr plays examined here, they all have relevance for the twentieth century for very similar reasons, or for reasons arising from the same causes.

The Deputy explores the problem of social and insti-

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[1] Ibid., p. 87.

tutional responsibility or guilt and shows the progress of a sensitive man through various stages of awareness and concern, all the way to the deliberate sacrifice of his own life for the redemption of his Church, which he has seen as guilty of the blood of millions. While The Deputy is a dramatization of a shocking and fascinating episode of recent history, it also explores a problem of great importance in the domestic and international problems of the world more than twenty years later than the events dramatized. Regardless of the artistic merits of the play, which have been seriously questioned, it will continue to have great relevance for human relationships, far into the future.

Although The Tidings Brought to Mary was written in 1910, before the terrible upheavals which have destroyed the easy optimism so common in the early years of the century, the play still has something important to say to men. Claudel suggests in this play that the one who makes himself a stranger to the world, who becomes a pilgrim in it, who offers his life in altruistic love, may well have a part in healing the social and political wounds which destroy the richness of life for people. It is one of the ironies of history that the very catastrophes which have made some men cynical have also stimulated a fresh appreciation of the necessity of altruistic love in human life.

While it is unlikely that many were aware of it in 1935, the struggle between Church and state which is implicit in Murder in the Cathedral was just as important in the middle nineteen thirties as it was in the twelfth century. The culmination of Thomas' movement to martyrdom, together with the ritual overtones of the action, tends to overshadow the theme of heroic resistance on the part of a churchman faced by the unacceptable demands of a ruler. Even though it was an occasional play, and its theme was partly dictated by the occasion, Murder in the Cathedral was strikingly prophetic, for the decade in which it appeared saw a host of churchmen martyred through resisting the idolatrous claims of the state.

CHAPTER V

THE SACRIFICE OF THE SCAPEGOAT

For the purposes of this study, the scapegoat is distinguished from the martyr by one important consideration: the martyr dies in defense of his religious convictions, and the scapegoat is killed in order to preserve the well-being of a community, or to achieve some other social or religious value for a community. The two categories are frequently mixed in the experience of one person. For instance, the protagonists of The Gospel Witch die because they refuse to compromise their own religious principles, and they serve as scapegoats for the New England community that kills them as witches. Writing about stories of scapegoats, Roy R. Male says, "Stories of this kind tend to reflect strong ritual origin. The community seeks to regain or preserve its order by placing its guilt upon the individual and then exiling or sacrificing him."[1] Male goes on to describe the typical pattern of conflict in stories of the scapegoat:

> When characters are individualized in stories of this kind, they tend to fall into a triangular pattern: the innocent victim, the judge or mediator, and the informer. It is the situation typified by Billy Budd, Captain Vere, and Claggart.[2]

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[1] Roy R. Male, Types of Short Fiction (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1962), p. 308.

[2] Ibid.

E. O. James describes the ritual of the scapegoat as it was practiced in the fourth century B.C. His account is based on the prescriptions given in Leviticus: XVI and XVII:

> Two he-goats were 'set before Yahweh' and lots cast over them for the purpose of assigning one to Yahweh as a sin-offering, and the other to the demon Azazel as the sin-receiver. Yahweh's victim was then slain and Azazel's goat was dispatched alive to 'a solitary land' laden with the uncleanness of Israel and its sanctuary.[1]

Because the scapegoat was thought to bear away the sins of the people, the term has been used popularly to designate any person who is punished in the place of another, more guilty person, and usually through the scheming of the more guilty party. It is probably from this popular usage of the term that Male derives his terms "informer" and "judge or mediator."

The play chosen for major treatment in this chapter is the Coxe and Chapman adaptation of Melville's Billy Budd. Filling out the chapter will be discussions of Ugo Betti's The Queen and the Rebels, and Lyon Phelps' The Gospel Witch. The triangular pattern described by Male can be found in one form or another in each of these plays, though Billy Budd offers the clearest example of it.

In Billy Budd there is little or no movement in the

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[1] E. O. James, Seasonal Feasts and Festivals (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 119.

consciousness of the protagonist; the movement is to be found in the working out of Claggart's plot to destroy Billy Budd, and in the action of the court martial which pronounces sentence upon Budd. Billy himself never has any understanding of the forces that move him to the point of his sacrificial death.

The central action of Billy Budd is the conflict between good and evil, as personified by Billy Budd and John Claggart.[1] The most important result of the conflict is that Budd is moved unwittingly to the point of being sacrificed as a scapegoat. The driving force of the conflict is Claggart's instinctive hatred of Budd. Several devices are used to show the hatred, but there is no effort to explain the motivation of Claggart until the trial.

Claggart's evil is reflected in his vision of life, seen in his description of the sea: "Down where the manta drifts, and the shark and the ray, storms wait for a wind while all the surface dazzles."[2] Claggart later says that he is a man "who knows how the world's made: made as I am."[3] One of the crewmen says of Claggart, "He's the devil

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[1]Marvin Halverson, Religious Drama 3 (Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, 1959), p. 140.

[2]Louis Coxe and Robert Chapman, "Billy Budd," I, i, Halverson, op. cit., p. 154.

[3]Ibid., I, iii, p. 168.

himself between decks."[1]

The character of Billy Budd is established through his open and innocent manner, his sometimes unsettling candor, and the comments of the crewmen. Even though Budd estimates he has been a seaman for ten years, Gardiner assumes he is a green hand, and his fellows call him "Baby." Billy's uncalculating honesty is shown when he tells Captain Vere that Claggart knows about the sick man's climbing up the rigging, only to fall to his death, because Claggart was on the scene.[2] Billy is so innocent that he cannot even grasp the possibility that a man can be as evil as the other crewmen consider Claggart to be.

The forces that move Billy to his sacrificial death begin to operate as soon as Claggart becomes aware of Budd's nature. The two meet for the first time when Claggart enters a compartment just as Budd drops a pot of food to the deck. Claggart says, "Handsomely done, young fellow, handsomely done. And handsome is as handsome did it, too."[3] Since that scene comes soon after some exposition of Claggart's evil character, the ominous irony of Claggart's words is apparent.

When Billy tries to befriend Claggart, the Master-at-Arms seems nearly ready to respond to Budd's natural good-

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[1] Ibid., I, i, p. 151.

[2] Ibid., I, i, p. 156.

[3] Ibid., I, i, p. 153.

ness, but he suddenly exclaims, "No. No! Charm me, too, would you! Get away!"[1] Immediately he rebukes Squeak for failing to get Budd on report for minor infractions of regulations. He makes it clear that Squeak knows well enough how to manufacture infractions where there are none to be found.

Even though Claggart is working for his destruction, Budd is convinced that the man is his friend. When Dansker tells Billy that Claggart's friendly behavior is a sign that he is "down upon you," Billy replies, "But he's my friend. I know he talks a little strange, but he's my friend," Dansker responds, "Nobody's friend is Jimmy-Legs. Yours the least of all, maybe."[2] Immediately after this, Squeak makes an obvious and inept effort to create dissension between the other crewmen and Budd. Jenkins angrily pushes Squeak away, saying, "Damn your lies! Get back to Jimmy-Legs and kiss his butt. And stay out of my way!"[3]

Finally, Claggart engineers a pretext for charging Billy Budd with fomenting mutiny among the crew, and he presents his charge to Captain Vere.

Billy Budd's radical innocence makes it impossible for him to understand that Claggart is steadily drawing him into a trap to destroy him. His innocence gives him two

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[1] Ibid., I, ii, p. 163. [2] Ibid., II, iii, p. 166.

[3] Ibid., II, iii, p. 167.

points of similarity to the ritual scapegoat: he is ignorant of the forces that are moving him to destruction, and he is spotless (morally spotless in Budd's case).

The confrontation between Billy Budd and John Claggart, in Captain Vere's presence, is the climax of the play, and this scene offers a clear illustration of the triangular pattern described by Roy Male, with Budd as innocent victim, Claggart as informer, and Vere as the mediator or judge.[1] Billy's inability to speak in answer to the accusation suggests a parallel with the trial of Jesus before Pilate, in which Jesus did speak, but would not answer any of the charges made against him. This forms another suggestion of the ritual nature of Billy's coming death.

Although the officers of the court martial find unanimously in favor of acquittal, Captain Vere presses them to reverse their findings and hang Budd. He argues that the crewmen remember the Spithead and Nore mutinies and might very well mistake the court's compassion for fear. Since their first duty as officers is to maintain the effectiveness of The Indomitable as a weapon, they must sacrifice a man they know to be morally innocent.

Vere's insistence that Billy Budd must die is no mere pragmatic decision, made to meet an occasion; it rests upon

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[1]Male, loc. cit.

Vere's belief in the importance of maintaining the proper forms of society. Vere is not a mere literalist, stubbornly bent upon keeping the letter of the law, regardless of circumstances; he represents the view that forms are all that stand between a well-ordered society and absolute disorder. He says:

> Laws of one kind or another shape our course from birth to death. These are the laws pronouncing Billy's guilt. Admiralty codes are merely shadows of them. . . . without this lawful tyranny, what should we have but worse tyranny of anarchy and chaos?[1]

In being sacrificed for the preservation of the social order, Billy Budd fits the traditional pattern of the scapegoat.

Billy Budd is a fast-paced play, as are The Queen and the Rebels and The Gospel Witch. This may be explained by the relative simplicity of the dramatic action involved in depicting the sacrifice of a scapegoat. There is no need to show character development, although some portrayal of character may be helpful in suggesting motivation. Plot development need not be complex; about all that needs to be shown is the singling out of the victim, and the operation of the machinery that moves the victim to the point of sacrifice.

Not all scapegoats in drama share Billy Budd's ignorance of the forces that cause his death. The protagonists of the two plays that follow have considerable understanding

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[1] Ibid., III. 1, p. 190.

of what is happening to them. They are just as powerless as Billy Budd to stop their execution, but they understand very well why they are being sacrificed.

Ugo Betti's The Queen and the Rebels is included in this chapter because the action of the play takes the protagonist, Argia, to her death as a scapegoat. At the same time, the play could be classed with those depicting growth of understanding, because Ariga learns, just before her death at the hands of a band of revolutionaries, how to value herself and her life properly.

The zeal of a violent revolution is the driving force of the play. From the time the busload of refugees is stopped in a hillside village, the play moves in an atmosphere of fear, suspicion, intrigue, and of the fever to find someone to carry the blame for all the troubles of a sorrow-laden country.

The talk soon turns to the "so-called 'Queen'" who escaped from the revolutionaries some five years earlier. One of the party of refugees, an engineer, says of the Queen:

> She was never really Queen. . . . That great lady was not only the blazoned wife of a usurper; she was the real usurper and intriguer herself. She was the evil genius behind everything, the Egeria, the secret inspirer of all the country's disasters.[1]

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[1] Ugo Betti, "The Queen and the Rebels," I, The Modern Theatre, Robert W. Corrigan, ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 634.

The Queen, then is the sought-after scapegoat, the one whose death will presumably satisfy the people's outraged sense of justice and solidify the presumed gains of the revolution.

Early in the play there is foreshadowing of Argia's assuming the role of the Queen. Although she is a prostitute, she defiantly says to her interrogator, "I have always had a very large number of servants at my disposal."[1] Later, when Argia and Raim are talking privately, Raim says to her:

> You know, Argia, one of the reasons you attract me is your silly games of make-believe the whole time. You've always tried to act so very grand. With me![2]

Argia's response is, "A few minutes ago, when they were all talking about the Queen, did you know they all looked at me? They half thought I was the Queen."[3]

The machinery that eventually takes Argia to her death begins to take shape when Argia tells Raim she has discovered the Queen. Argia's sudden decision to try to save the Queen, rather than carry out the plot to get her killed by a guard, provides Amos and General Biante an excuse to accuse Argia of being the Queen.

Although Argia at first denies being the Queen, her spirited replies to the questions of Amos and Biante make their accusation seem plausible. Caught up in the spirit of

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[1] Ibid., I. p. 633.

[2] Ibid., I, p. 636.

[3] Ibid., I, p. 636.

play-acting, Argia speaks sarcastically of all the luxuries she has known, prompting Amos to say to her, "If you're not the Queen, I'm bound to say you give a very good imitation of the haughty way she'd behave on an occasion like this."[1]

Argia has merely been enjoying the playacting, but Amos and Biante evidently find her good performance the answer to their need for someone to fill the role of the Queen and so serve as their scapegoat. Biante says triumphantly:

> Hahaha! Your Majesty! Yes, your famous name has brought a lot of people down from the mountains to meet you. Do you know what sort of help they're bringing you? Do you know what they want? (almost casually) To see you condemned to death and hanged.[2]

That the common people themselves are looking for a scapegoat becomes clear when the trial of Argia begins. Several people speak in rapid succession, blaming the Queen for all manner of troubles, including their personal inadequacy as parents. Typical of their complaints is this accusation by a peasant woman:

> The shirt I washed for my son, he said it was shabby. He said the soup I cooked for him tasted nasty. And now they've told me that he's lying out there, in the fields, with his arms wide-open, covered with ants. It's all the Queen's fault.[3]

Recognizing the danger of being taken for the Queen, Argia alternates between enjoying the regal pose and denying that she is the Queen. She even says that Raim and the

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[1] Ibid., III, p. 648. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., III, p. 649.

peasant woman who had been with her earlier (the real Queen) can vouch for her. Up to the moment when she sees the real Queen die of self-administered poison, she has no interest in being put to death for any reason. After the real Queen dies, Amos exults that Argia has no more accomplices to help her. "It's all over with you, your majesty! Answer us! You are the Queen!"[1] Moved by the craven fear of the real Queen, Argia decides to value herself more highly than has this poor woman with her peasant's costume and her downcast eyes. Argia the prostitute has never enjoyed the respect of men; Argia the Queen will be executed, but she will die as a person of some significance. She rises from the limp form of the dead Queen, and says, "Not every eye shall look to the ground. There shall still be someone to stand before you. Yes, I am the Queen."[2]

Amos informs Argia that the death sentence will soon be carried out, then offers her a pardon. She is inclined to accept until she hears the conditions. She is to confess that she has been guilty of all manner of illegal and dishonorable conduct, and she is to go on living, in disgrace, in the midst of her people. Realizing that her decision is important to the revolutionary group, Argia enjoys the feeling of importance that belongs to one whose mere decision is significant to others. She says:

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[1] Ibid., III, p. 651. [2] Ibid.

> I am free to say yes or no. And no one in the world can do anything about it. I am the one who decides. It's beautiful to be able to talk to you like this; to look about me like this . . . and to feel my breathing so free, and the beating of my heart so peaceful.[1]

The full significance of the change in Argia's self-conception is not clear until the speech she makes shortly before she steps out to face the firing squad. She says to Amos:

> Well, do you know what I think! I think there comes a time when the only thing to do is to stand up and say . . . 'Why do you insult me like this? And, my God, why have I allowed you to? Get away from me! Go away! Leave me alone! You take advantage of an immense mistake, a monstrous delusion! Respect me! Show me respect! Respect . . . because I am . . . the Queen! The Queen, and destined for other things than this.' What I want to do is to go out of doors as if it were a fine morning, and as if I had seen down there, at the end of the street, the cool fresh color of the sea, a color that makes the heart leap! And someone stops me, and then someone else, and someone else, with the usual rudeness. But this morning I don't even hear them. I'm not afraid any longer. My face expresses dignity. I am as I would always have wished to be. And it would have been simple after all. It would have been enough to want to be. Palaces have nothing to do with it. It was my own fault.[2]

Argia now feels that she <u>is</u> the Queen. She is not self-deluded; she has simply discovered the dignity that belongs to every human being. As she steps out to face the firing squad she says, "How lovely and serene it is over the mountains; and the star Diana is still there in the sky. Unques-

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., IV, p. 654.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., IV, pp. 654-655.

tionably, this is a seat for kings, and in it we must try to live regally."[1]

Argia has some understanding of the forces which have moved her to a scapegoat's death. Her comments to Amos and Biante are very perceptive. She understands that she is doomed to die because her death will advance the purposes of the revolutionary leaders. Her death might have seemed to her to be absurd, except that she has seen in the fearful behavior of the Queen a degradation that is a reminder of her own degradation. The Queen's suicide to avoid possible torture seems to crystallize Argia's feeling that she has an innate dignity which is deserving of respect, and that she will enjoy that respect at any cost. The Queen who steps out before the firing squad is more truly a Queen than the one who took her own life out of fear.

Giles and Martha Corey, the protagonists of Lyon Phelps' The Gospel Witch, are, like Argia, aware of what is happening to them. Like Argia, they also understand something of the forces that are destroying them and realize that it is not possible to save themselves.

The central action of The Gospel Witch is the accusation, trial, and death of Giles and Martha Corey during the witch fever of Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. The driving

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[1] Ibid., IV, p. 657.

force of the action is the community's response to the hysterical accusations of Ann Putnam and Abigail Parris that Martha Corey is torturing them and that Giles Corey once murdered a man because the Devil told him he would not be punished for the murder. Following the execution of Giles and Martha Corey, there are signs of the subsiding of the witch fever, together with some doubts in the mind of Thomas Putnam concerning the grounds of Ann's charges against the Coreys.

The action moves swiftly, and with an air of fatality. Soon after Ann Putnam and Abigail Parris accuse Martha Corey of witchcraft, Thomas Putnam and Ezekiel Cheever pay Martha an ominous visit. The sense of fatality is enhanced by the attitude of the two visitors. They seem to accept everything the girls have said about Martha Corey, but they refuse to accept anything Martha can say in her own defense. The same thing is true of the trial before Magistrate Hathorne, who shows no interest in Martha's defense, but wants only to know why Martha tortures the girls, and how long Martha is pledged to serve the Devil. The trial of Giles Corey is not dramatized, but is reported in part after he is jailed. Since Giles refuses to plead either guilty or not guilty, understanding that he is doomed in any case, the air of fatality is even more pronounced in his case than in Martha's.

Both Giles and Martha change during the course of the play, but the change is one of mood and attitude, not of character. The early scenes show Martha as a very humorous, lightly ironic observer of the life about her. She is genuinely religious, but not conventionally pious. She even dares to call her husband by the nickname, "Split-Foot." In the closing scenes, just before her execution, Martha is a serious and sober woman whose genuine piety now shows more clearly than in the earlier scenes. Her religion is portrayed as natural, in contrast to the external, conventional piety of persons such as the Reverend Mr. Parris. She says to Parris:

> Loving God, you lose a love of life,
> loving life, I lose a lack of God.
> I see by your face you can't understand.[1]

The early scenes show Giles as a man of rough manner who is, nevertheless, good-hearted. He is a recent convert to Christianity, through Martha's efforts. While he seems to be very much his own man, Giles is still cautious about the witch hysteria that has the whole community in such a frenzy. He warns Martha, who has no fears about the witch-hunts, that there is danger for them:

> They make me a member
> at this late date, and I'm glad. But this
> you can't teach me. You don't know

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[1]Lyon Phelps, "The Gospel Witch," vii, Religious Drama 3, ed. Marvin Halverson (Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, 1962), p. 296.

what rake-hell's rising in Mr. Parris' parish.
You don't guess how far devils may press us.[1]

The last words are an ironic foreshadowing of Giles' death by pressing with rocks. After Giles' arrest, he throws caution aside and stands firm on his integrity, in spite of Hathorne's increasingly clear threats to subject Giles to the torture of pressing. When that torture finally comes, Giles' only response is to moan periodically and to cry out at the last, "Pile on more rocks!"[2]

In her bed, Ann Putnam seems to suffer through the pressing of Corey, calling out that she cannot breathe because of the rocks. Thomas Putnam, her father, comes in to sit with her. Finally, after she has slept, started out of sleep, screamed, and talked of visions, Putnam begins to wonder whether she has induced the symptoms of torture by witches in herself.

Just as Putnam begins to have his doubts, Cheever comes with the news that Giles Corey is dead. He also says:

One wrote out on Ipswich Jail,
"A Plethora of Witches Will Not Suffice
the Appetite for Naming More!" Another
rumbled it out in a lion's voice,
and melted safely into the uneasy crowd.[3]

Putnam's uneasy doubts about the executions, the inscription on the jailhouse wall, and the roar from the man

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[1] Ibid., ii, p. 238. [2] Ibid., viii, p. 304.

[3] Ibid., ix, p. 309.

in the crowd, all indicate a cooling of the fever of witch-hunting. One of the twin scapegoats has died courageously, and the other is to hang at dawn. The hysteria has been satisfied; the community has preserved its well-being by loading its guilt, its anxieties, and its awareness of imperfection onto the backs of Giles and Martha Corey and has disposed of them with all the proper ceremonies of the religion of the community.

First produced in 1952, The Gospel Witch seems to reflect the political hysteria that characterized the efforts of Senator Joseph McCarthy to prove that certain agencies of the United States government were then seriously infiltrated by Communists. It is significant that Arthur Miller's The Crucible, having much the same subject matter as The Gospel Witch, appeared in the same year. It is also significant that Senator McCarthy's efforts to expose Communist infiltration of government agencies were commonly characterized as "witch hunts." Neither Miller's nor Phelps' play makes any allusion to contemporary politics, perhaps because neither wanted his play to be limited in its significance to a single instance of a perennial human problem. In addition to that, when the parallels are as clear as they were when these two plays were first produced, it is neither necessary nor desirable to call attention to them by the use of obvious devices.

All three of the plays discussed in this cahpter portray a movement of social forces which carry the scapegoat to his death, and all three show that the well-being of the community is affected by the death of the scapegoat. Billy Budd dies as a sacrifice to the forms that are necessary to a stable society; Argia dies so that a revolutionary party may convince the common people that the revolution is getting rid of the major cause of all their greatest problems; Giles and Martha Corey die to discharge the accumulated guilt and anxiety of a Puritan community, so making it possible for the community to resume a more stable routine of life. In all of these cases a burden of social guilt is placed upon the scapegoat, so that his death insures the continued stability and well-being of the community. That this is a religious value can be demonstrated by reference to the religious quality of the patriotic appeals made by political leaders during times of war, when the stability, well-being, and survival of a nation are in question.

CHAPTER VI

THE REVERSAL OF ROLES

Various forms of inversion or reversal have been used in drama, especially comedy, for centuries, but it is rarely used as the central device in religious drama. The inversion of commonly accepted values is almost a trademark of the work of George Bernard Shaw, whose melodrama The Devil's Disciple is the first subject of this chapter. This play is one of several in which Shaw reverses popular judgment concerning religious beliefs and practices. Such a reversal of popular religious ideas was part of the technique of the prophets of the Old Testament, and of Jesus himself; thus, The Devil's Disciple, comic melodrama that it is, stands firmly within the best tradition of religious protest.

While it is commonly said that Shaw's plays are vehicles for the delivering of lectures, the reversal of roles in this play does not come about primarily through debate or other forms of verbal persuasion, but through the force of circumstances operating upon the real nature of Dick Dudgeon and Anthony Anderson, the two characters involved in the reversal of roles.

The movement of The Devil's Disciple takes Dudgeon and Anderson to a dual recognition, in which each recognizes that his true nature has been hidden beneath a public mask.

The resolution of the play amounts very simply to each man's assuming the public mask befitting his true nature. Anderson announces the double reversal, suggesting that he and Dudgeon will keep each other's coat, which they have already switched, as a sign of the reversal.

The reversal of roles is made to appear more drastic than it really is by the use of a very simple device. Shaw gives each of the men destined for the reversal a title of some kind, with the reputation suggested by the title. This sets up stereotyped expectations, which are then upset by the reversal. The appellation "the Devil's disciple," together with Dick Dudgeon's reputation, suggests a man of truly unsavory character. Anthony Anderson's role as the local minister surrounds him with a set of role expectations, roughly equivalent to a reputation. The expectations set up by the titles and reputations of the two men so mask their true natures that the eventual reversal of roles or masks appears to be a reversal of character on the part of both men. The reversal actually goes little deeper than the switching of coats, although it is a surprise to the men themselves, since they have shared the public appraisal of their respective characters.

The first reference to Dick Dudgeon comes from his mother, who is the epitome of those who regard Dick as a reprobate. She bemoans her fate at having "One son a fool (Christy), and the other a lost sinner that's left his home

to live with sumgglers and gypsies and villains, the scum of the earth."[1] Later, when Anderson mentions Dick's presence at the hanging of Uncle Peter Dudgeon, she says, "Let it be a warning to him. He may end that way himself, the wicked, dissolute, godless . . ."[2] Anderson's reference to the "wicked" message Richard sent his dying father reinforces the bad impression Mrs. Dudgeon's remarks have begun to create. Mrs. Anderson tells Essie that Dick Dudgeon is a bad man, that he does not love his mother, and that he plays and wrestles on Sundays.[3] The attitude of the family, as it gathers for the reading of the will, is wholly in keeping with the unfavorable picture of Dick Dudgeon sketched by the comments of Mrs. Dudgeon and the Andersons.

Dick's first appearance creates an ambiguous impression on the reader or audience. On the one hand, his manner is raffish enough to suggest that he is every bit as evil as his mother has said. On the other hand, his delightful unmasking of the other members of the Dudgeon family, revealing their hypocrisy and pettiness, suggests that he may be on the side of the angels after all. More evidence of Dick's true character is the attitude of lawyer Hawkins.

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[1]George Bernard Shaw, "The Devil's Disciple," I, Complete Plays with Prefaces, III (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1962), p. 275.

[2]Ibid., p. 276.

[3]Ibid., p. 283.

Hawkins, who gives the impression of being a man of good judgment, shows a certain partiality to Dick throughout the will-reading scene, and when Mrs. Dudgeon objects to the will, Hawkins says, "This is a very wrongly and irregularly worded will, Mrs. Dudgeon; though it contains in my judgment an excellent disposal of his property."[1]

The first act contains much foreshadowing of Anderson's reversal of roles, but some of it is accessible only to a reader of the play. The reader finds that Anderson has the look of a strong, worldly man, and that he carries an impression of authority, but secular authority. The reader also learns that Anderson is uneasy at solemn family gatherings, especially funereal ones. Mrs. Dudgeon's condemnation of Anderson because he married for love tells more about her than it does about Anderson, but it shows at least that Anderson is not dominated by Mrs. Dudgeon's masochistically-ascetic brand of Puritanism. The clearest hint of what lies behind the public mask of the Reverend Mr. Anthony Anderson is Dick Dudgeon's statement that Anderson has not only conducted the service for those who prayed for the defeat of King George, but that he has sold his family Bible and bought a pair of pistols. Also, when all the Dudgeon men deny Richard's declaration that "We're all rebels," Anderson remains silent.

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[1] Ibid., p. 291.

The first act shows the superiority of Dick Dudgeon's religion to the dead Puritanism of his relatives. Dick talks of serving the Devil, but he is kind to Essie: the others talk of serving God, but they are cruel to her. Considering the negative character of Mrs. Dudgeon's religion, it seems clear that Dick has called himself the Devil's Disciple because it labels him as one devoted to the opposite of whatever claims his mother's devotion. Shaw explained that "Dick Dudgeon . . . is a Puritan of the Puritans. He is brought up in a household where the Puritan religion has died, and become . . . an excuse for his mother's master passion of hatred."[1] One critic rightly pointed out that Dick Dudgeon is not very convincing in most of his performance as the Devil's Disciple. He said:

> Dick does not carry his role of the Devil's Disciple much beyond the stage of irreverent repartee, and even this is carried on solely for the benefit of those who can best profit by it, his mother and his uncles.[2]

Dick is clearly a Shavian saint, in a rather thin disguise.

Something of Dick's true nature is expressed when he is at the tea table with Judith Anderson. He says:

> I am thinking. It is all so strange to me. I can see the beauty and peace of this home: I think I have

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[1]George Bernard Shaw, "On Diabolonian Ethics," Complete Plays with Prefaces, III (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1962), p. xlix.

[2]Anthony S. Abbott, Shaw and Christianity (New York: The Seabury Press, 1965), p. 98.

> never been more at rest in my life than at this moment; and yet I know quite well I could never live here. It's not in my nature, I suppose, to be domesticated. But it's very beautiful: it's almost holy.[1]

His behavior when the soldiers come to arrest him as Anderson shows that he is no disciple of the Devil of traditional theology. He goes quietly, with dignity and courage. He is even amused by the humorous irony of his being mistaken for the clergyman. Dudgeon seems not to understand fully his reasons for allowing the soldiers to arrest him in Anderson's place. When Judith visits him just before the court martial, she suggests some conventional romantic and moral reasons, which he denies. He tells her he has been trying to understand what made him act as he did. Later he tells her that he acted without motive or interest:

> All I can tell you is that when it came to the point whether I would take my neck out of the noose and put another man's into it, I could not do it. . . . I have been brought up standing by the law of my nature; and I may not go against it, gallows or no gallows.[2]

Although the state of Dick's mind is not altogether clear, it may be that he does not himself understand that the law of his nature is not of the Devil. In his world, God has represented greed, hate, repression; he has always stood for the opposite of these, which would seem to mean the Devil.

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[1]Shaw, "The Devil's Disciple," II, op. cit., p. 306.

[2]Ibid., III, p. 322.

It remains for Anthony Anderson to point out, near the end of the play, that Dick has more of the qualities of a minister of the Gospel than he himself has.[1]

The trial scene shows that Dick Dudgeon is superior to gentility, as represented by General Burgoyne.[2] The exchanges between Burgoyne and Dudgeon are delightful, but in the long run Dick refuses to play the role of the gentleman according to Burgoyne's rules. Instead of accepting his execution with cheerful good grace, Dick publicly denounces the coming execution as murder. Dick says to Burgoyne:

> Hark ye, General Burgoyne. If you think that I like being hanged, youre mistaken. I dont like it; and I dont mean to pretend that I do. And if you think I'm obliged to you for hanging me in a gentlemanly way, youre wrong there too. I take the whole business in devilish bad part; and the only satisfaction I have in it is that youll feel a good deal meaner than I'll look when it's over.[3]

The reversal of roles for Anthony Anderson takes place in the second act. When Judith finally manages to tell him that the soldiers had come, not for Dick Dudgeon, but for him, Anderson responds swiftly, energetically, and decisively. His hasty departure, marked by violent preparations, oaths and gruff words, signals his change to a new role, but Judith does not understand. The vehemence of her reaction may easily convince all but the very perceptive

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[1] Ibid., p. 345. [2] Abbott, op. cit., p. 104.

[3] Shaw, "Disciple," III, op. cit., p. 341.

that Anderson has indeed run away to save himself. Shaw must have intended such a misunderstanding, for it reinforces the effectiveness of the surprise ending.

The double reversal of roles is made clear when Anderson comes back just in time to stop the execution. The following speech by Anderson makes it clear that the reversal has been a matter of recognition, not of change of character or real nature:

> Sir: it is in the hour of trial that a man finds his true profession. This foolish young man boasted himself the Devil's Disciple; but when the hour of trial came to him, he found that it was his destiny to suffer and be faithful to the death. I thought myself a decent minister of the gospel of peace; but when the hour of trial came to me, I found that it was my destiny to be a man of action, and that my place was amid the thunder of the captains and shouting. So I am starting life at fifty as Captain Anthony Anderson of the Springtown militia; and the Devil's Disciple here will start presently as the Reverend Richard Dudgeon, and wag his pow in my old pulpit, and give good advice to this silly sentimental little wife of mine. Your mother told me, Richard, that I should never have chosen Judith if I'd been born for the ministry. I am afraid she was right; so, by your leave, you may keep my coat and I'll keep yours.[1]

It is essential to a comic melodrama such as The Devil's Disciple that the reversal of roles be a matter of recognition, not of character change; the latter tends to be serious, especially in plays involving religion. The two reversals take place almost simultaneously, at almost precisely the middle of the text, and at the middle of the play. What comes before the reversal deals with the con-

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[1] Ibid., pp. 344-345.

trast between Dick Dudgeon and the other members of his family. What comes after the middle point deals with the revelation of the true character of Dick Dudgeon and of Anthony Anderson. It is at the middle point of the play that Dick Dudgeon takes up Anderson's best coat, which the minister has left hanging on the press; soon afterward Anderson takes up the coat of the Devil's Disciple. Anderson's proposal that the switch be made a permanent one is a satisfying resolution of what appears on the surface to be a disruption of the proper order of things; it is an announcement that both he and Dudgeon have found their true vocation. One critic said, "The exchange of coats is a visual metaphor for the twofold discovery and conversion which has taken place."[1]

The reversal of roles in Eugene Ionesco's Rhinoceros is accomplished through movement and counter-movement. The most obvious and spectacular aspect of the movement is the metamorphosis of everyone but Berenger from humans to rhinoceroses. The counter-movement consists of a gradual, almost imperceptible, change in the outlook of Berenger. The total effect of the movement is that Berenger is transformed from being a nearly subhuman outcast at the beginning of the play, to being the only surviving human in a world

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[1]Martin Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theater (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 205.

full of once-human rhinoceroses.

Most critics discuss Rhinoceros as a political play, seeing the beasts as a symbol of conformism in the totalitarian state. Some go a second step and see the conformist pressures of society as Ionesco's target. Mr. Pronko offers a broader view of the significance of this play, one that is especially relevant to this study. Part of his statement follows:

> Rhinoceros may be a commentary on political dictatorship and its unthinking followers. But it is just as valid a commentary on educational and religious "truth," for the method is indirect, as nondidactic theater must always be.[1]

Rhinoceros has religious significance beyond the implicit criticism of unthinking conformity to an "official" doctrine. Berenger's inability to become a rhinoceros after everyone else, even his beloved Daisy, has succumbed to the various attractions of "rhinoceritis," seems to be the result of a deeply imbedded integrity, which Berenger himself does not quite understand.

In the opening scene, in which Berenger and Jean meet at a cafe terrace, and in the first scene of act two, in which Berenger shows up nearly late for work, he is portrayed as an unkempt man of irregular habits, one upon whom others

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[1]Leonard Cabell Pronko, Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theater in France (Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1964), p. 106.

cannot depend. He does not measure up to the image of the successful man. Jean, on the other hand, dresses impeccably, and conducts himself in such a way as to make a favorable impression on people at all times. Even so, Berenger has a quality of humanity that is admirable, especially when he is compared with the well-groomed automatons who surround him. From the standpoint of the respectable, more conventional people, Berenger is almost subhuman, since he seems indifferent to the details of dress and conduct that are the prerequisites of social approval.

While Jean gradually changes into a rhinoceros, Berenger's deep humanity begins to emerge. He apologizes for the way he treated Jean at their last meeting and generally displays a very generous and warm nature. As Jean's symptoms become more alarming, Berenger becomes seriously concerned about him and proposes calling a doctor. All the while, Jean becomes increasingly belligerent, as his skin becomes greener and harder, and his bump gradually enlarges from a mere lump to a full-blown horn. As Berenger mourns Boeuf's transformation, Jean defends it as a very natural and proper thing. The high point of Berenger's argument comes in the following:

> Just think a moment. You must admit that we have a philosophy that animals don't share, and an irreplaceable set of values, which it's taken centuries

of human civilization to build up.[1]

He cannot believe Jean is serious in replying, "When we've demolished all that, we'll be better off."[2]

As the third act opens, Berenger is in his room, apprehensively watching for signs of "rhinoceritis" in himself. As he nervously discusses the epidemic with Dudard, Berenger expresses a significant theory concerning "Rhinoceritis." He says:

> But if one really doesn't want to, really doesn't want to catch this thing, which after all is a nervous disease -- then you don't catch it, you simply don't catch it![3]

The conclusion of the play will suggest that Berenger's theory is so profoundly true that even his desire to become one of the herd of rhinoceroses cannot overcome his deep commitment to human values. Subconsciously he really doesn't want to "catch it."

As this scene moves along, Dudard, like Jean, begins to manifest sympathy for the rhinoceroses and goes on following the rest of the steps that lead to metamorphosis. All the while, Berenger becomes increasingly alarmed and goes on maintaining arguments in favor of human values. When logic fails, Berenger falls back on emotion, saying simply, "You're human. . . . Come back Dudard! We're fond

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[1]Eugene Ionesco, Rhinoceros (New York: Grove Press, 1960), II, ii, p. 67.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., III, p. 76.

of you, don't go!"[1]

The movement is nearly complete when Daisy and Berenger are left alone, and Daisy begins to sympathize with the rhinoceroses. Berenger's humanity has emerged to such a degree that he hopes to join with Daisy to start mankind over again. He says:

> Listen, Daisy, there is something we can do. We'll have children, and our children will have children -- it'll take time, but together we can regenerate the human race.[2]

Daisy is not interested in the project, for she is beginning to believe the others were right to change. She explains:

> Those are the real people. They look happy. They're content to be what they are. They don't look insane. They look very natural. They were right to do what they did.[3]

After Daisy goes out to join the rhinoceroses, Berenger takes out some photographs, which he hangs on the wall, near some of the rhino heads. The pictures are of an old man, a huge woman, and another man, but Berenger says, "Now I recognize me: that's me, that's me! That's me, that's me!"[4] Berenger is now all mankind.

Finally, Berenger begins to wish he could become a rhinoceros. He finds his smooth brow and his slack, white skin ugly. The trumpeting of the rhinos begins to sound charming, even though it is raucous. He says:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 93-94.

[2] Ibid., p. 102.

[3] Ibid., p. 103.

[4] Ibid., p. 106.

> Now I'll never become a rhinoceros, never, never! I've gone past changing. I want to, I really do, but I can't, I just can't. . . . People who try to hang onto their individuality always come to a bad end.[1]

Realizing that he cannot become a rhinoceros, Berenger says that he will hold out to the end: "I'm the last man left, and I'm staying that way until the end. I'm not capitulating."[2] Esslin points out that this conclusion shows the absurdity of holding out as an individual, just as the play as a whole shows the absurdity of conformism.[3]

Even though Esslin's comment on the conclusion is unquestionably valid, Berenger remains the only character in the play whose integrity as a human individual is too profound and unconditioned to permit him to undergo the metamorphosis from man to rhinoceros. Berenger moves against the major movement of the play, developing from a nearly subhuman outcast at the beginning to the only man on earth at the end. It is true that Berenger has the integrity of the nonconformist from the beginning, but he does seem to change in his manner of expressing his nonconformity, in response to the rapid spread of "rhinoceritis." In the beginning he is a slovenly man, who appears to be somewhat debased. The crisis brings out his innate dignity and

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[1] Ibid., p. 107.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, 1961), pp. 126-127.

integrity. When the absurdity of the conformism of the "respectable" crowd is expressed through the metaphor of "rhinoceritis," Berenger's true nature is brought into sharp focus.

Berenger's reversal is not a true reversal of character: it is a discovery of character, in response to a crisis. In that respect, Rhinoceros is much like The Devil's Disciple. The major differences between the two plays are those of tone and intent.

In Rhinoceros the tone is serious, in spite of the many laughter-provoking incidents and speeches in the play. The laughter is occasioned by the revelation of the absurd, so that it tends to be, not gay, but grim. The tone of The Devil's Disciple is that of satire, and the laughter is elicited by revelations of sham, and ironic reversals of various kinds. From the standpoint of religious values in the plays, the intent of Rhinoceros may be expressed as the exploration of the meaning of integrity, in the midst of pressures to conform. That of The Devil's Disciple seems to be the criticism of perversions of religion, and the exaltation of a vital, life-affirming religion in the place of the dead forms repudiated by the action of the play.

CHAPTER VII

"HERE WE GO 'ROUND THE PRICKLY PEAR"

The two plays considered in this chapter are not "religious" in the popular sense of the term, but their central concern with ultimate questions, together with their importance in modern drama, justifies their inclusion in this study. Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot is not didactic in the same way as Shaw's plays are; yet the play is a dramatic and insistent assertion that human life is absurd. To deal with that assertion, as anyone who attends thoughtfully to the play must, is to deal with a problem that is fundamentally and primarily a religious problem. Jean Paul Sartre's No Exit is perhaps more difficult to defend as a "religious" play than is Godot; yet its central concern is with a problem that has engaged some of the greatest prophets and teachers of religion. No Exit is a dramatization of one of Sartre's most important ideas, that a man's acts determine his essence, and thus the meaning of his life. In Christian history the same general problem has taken a different form. Since man's essence is given, the task of the individual is to make those choices which will shape his life in conformity with that given essence. The dilemma over ethical choices has frequently come down to the question of faith and works. It could be said that, in

Sartre's thought, one must keep faith with his own works.

Both No Exit and Waiting for Godot can be seen as having a circular movement. This circularity is especially significant in Godot, where the activity is wholly absurd. Both plays generate an atmosphere of despair, and because the characters of both plays are trapped in the circle of their movement, the despair is ultimate; there is, in both cases, "no exit." Some form of despair is a common element in religions, but unconditioned despair is a denial of the truth and efficacy of all religions.

The stark platform of Godot is the scene of a great deal of activity and talk, but it is all futile and absurd. The verdict is given in the opening words of the play, when Estragon says, "Nothing to be done." Didi and Gogo talk almost incessantly, but their talk cannot change their condition, and the only "action" of which they are capable is the inaction of waiting. Commenting on the fruitless activity of Godot, Pronko said:

> Godot contains a great deal of external movement. . . . But it is only a superficial kind of action, for one of the basic assumptions of the play is that life is meaningless and monotonous, and leads from nothing to nowhere. . . . the conviction that nothing ever really happens, that there is no such thing as action, forms the fundamental action of the play.[1]

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[1]Leonard Cabell Pronko, Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theater in France (Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1964), p. 26.

Wallace Fowlie described the circular movement of the play somewhat differently, saying, "The Act of waiting is never over, and yet it mysteriously starts up again each day. . . . Each day is the return to the beginning. Nothing is completed because nothing can be completed."[1]

While the structure of Godot is generally simple, circularity is expressed at many levels within the over-all structure. The circularity of the whole is suggested by the great similarity of the two acts. There is a circularity in the appearance of the many themes of the play, which are brought up early in the first act, reappear frequently, then come up once again at the very end of the play. The stage business runs in circles, reinforcing the circling themes. Finally, there is a circularity in the dialogue, which returns again and again to the same topics.

There is in Godot a strong congruity of form and content; thus, the early part of this discussion dwells upon form at some length. The relevance of the form to the content will become clear as the discussion moves along.

The following passage from Pronko convincingly relates the similarity of the acts to the circular movement of the play:

> The second act is constructed like the first, and by the end of the play we are back where we began, if, indeed, we have moved from there at all. Godot's

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[1]Wallace Fowlie, Dionysus in Paris (New York: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, 1960), p. 212.

> structure might be described as circular with the stress on similitude, monotony, and endless repetition. Each act could be considered complete in itself, but the first without the second would not be so conclusively despairing, for we might still hope that on another day Godot would indeed arrive. Act II, however, shows us that this monotonous rhythm is a recurrent one, and will probably go on forever.[1]

The endless circle of futile movement is strongly suggested at the outset of the second act, when Vladimir comes on stage singing his endless song about the dog who stole a crust of bread.

Within the first five pages of Act I, nine themes or motifs are introduced, every one of them repeated within the last two pages of Act II. These themes appear at various places throughout the play, sometimes taking different forms. The themes follow, in the order of their appearance at the end of the play: (1) the desire to depart, with its corollary, the necessity of remaining immobile; (2) the necessity of waiting for Godot; (3) interest in the tree; (4) the attractiveness of suicide; (5) the impossibility of facing life, with its corollary, the necessity of facing life; (6) the possibility that parting might be good; (7) the chance of salvation, with its uncertainty an inescapable fact; (8) distress caused by that which should comfort or protect one; (9) loss of dignity through physical exposure -- fallen trousers, unbuttoned flies. The circle of futility

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[1]Pronko, op. cit., p. 28.

is closed by Vladimir's suggestion that they go, which is mocked by the necessary immobility of the two tramps.

The circle of themes and motifs includes the outstanding items of stage business and dialogue. On six different occasions the theme of discomfort caused by the very things that should give one comfort is expressed through Vladimir's efforts to find the source of irritation in his hat, or through Estragon's troubles with his shoes, or both at the same time. The loss of dignity is expressed through Vladimir's unbuttoned fly, Estragon's dropping of his trousers, and the falling flat of all the characters when Vladimir and Estragon try to help the blinded Pozzo. Loss of dignity is, of course, diffused throughout the entire play through the miserable dress and the bleak circumstances of life endured by the two tramps. The idea of waiting for Godot is mentioned in some way at least eighteen times during the course of the play, twelve of the repetitions coming in the second act. That life is unbearable is suggested by Estragon's repeatedly trying to sleep, and by his disgust at being awakened each time by Vladimir, who wants to talk. In the last few lines of the play, Estragon says, "I can't go on like this." Vladimir replies, "That's what you think."[1] An everlasting circularity is implied by that

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[1]Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot (New York: Grove Press, 1954), p. 60.

reply. All the other themes mentioned above crop up from three to six times during the course of the play, each repetition underscoring or reinforcing the feeling that the characters are moving in a circle, and that their circular movement cannot end until they stop all movement in death. As the critic has expressed it, ". . . the two tramps cannot not wait for Godot, and . . . he cannot come."[1] The unending revolutions of the concentric circles of absurdity give off a music, not of the spheres, but of despair, and its theme is that of endless, fruitless waiting.

Vladimir and Estragon may be taken as a dual representation of a twentieth-century Everyman. Grossvogel has pointed out their identification with the mythic figure of Charlie Chaplin's little man, who tries to live decently in a world that conspires against his efforts to maintain his dignity.[2] Waiting for Godot is a dramatic rendering of the predominant mood of growing numbers of people in this century. Vladimir and Estragon live in a barren world that suggests the "dead land" of Eliot's "The Hollow Men," and their desperate merry-go-round of fruitless activities

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[1]Powlie, op. cit., p. 212.

[2]David I. Grossvogel, 20th Century French Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 324. Cf. Jacques Guicharnaud, Modern French Theatre from Giradoux to Beckett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 216.

evokes the aimless circling 'round the prickly pear in that poem. All the other categories of movement explored in this study assume that man's life has meaning, and that man can make choices and take actions which will improve his spiritual status in some way. Even the scapegoat, while he may not die willingly for others, enjoys a certain spiritual stature in his death. Waiting for Godot denies the ultimate significance of man's choices and actions. Even No Exit, while it does stress the importance of man's acts, denies the ultimate significance of human acts, since there is no divine order to make man's life meaningful.

The decadent luxury of the Second Empire setting of No Exit contrasts sharply with the barren platform of Godot. The luxury of the furnishings notwithstanding, the occupants of Sartre's apartment in Hell find their situation no more tolerable than Beckett's tramps find theirs. Furthermore, Sartre's characters are as powerless to leave the scene of their suffering or to change the conditions of their existence (if one should call it existence) as are Vladimir and Estragon. Sartre's characters too are caught up in a circular movement that is destined to repeat itself. Both plays are set outside of time, so that no limits can be set on the duration of their circular movement.

The circularity of Godot is expressed through very pointed repetitions and through the other devices just dis-

cussed. That of No Exit is shown through Garcin's repeatedly turning back to his effort to get the others to say that his pacifism was heroic, not cowardly. They, of course, can judge only by what he did, and his breakdown before his execution had the appearance of cowardice. As Beckett's tramps go on waiting for Godot, whose hoped-for appearance means salvation, so Garcin must go on trying to get someone to believe in him, for that is his only salvation. The play ends when Garcin says, "Well, well, let's get on with it." That is the same kind of assurance of an eternal recurrence of the action as is afforded by the immobility of Didi and Gogo.

While Godot's circularity is expressed through an admirable congruity of form and content, the surface movement of No Exit is linear, with only Garcin's closing words to imply endless repetition. The interaction of Sartre's characters leads them from complete ignorance to some clear insights into their situation. Beneath the surface of that growth of understanding is another movement, which is circular -- that of the shifting relationships of the three main characters as they try to define themselves, each using the others as his mirror.

The looking-glass metaphor is employed several times throughout the play. It is significant for the philosophical burden of the play, but Sartre has also provided a lit-

eral significance for it in the surface action. The room shared by the three "absentees" contains no mirrors, and none of the three has been allowed to bring a personal mirror with him. Having tried to apply make-up without a mirror, Estelle falls to talking of the six big mirrors she used to have in her bedroom on earth. She always liked to have mirrors nearby. "When I talked to people I always made sure there was one nearby in which I could see myself. I watched myself talking. And somehow it kept me alert, seeing myself as the others saw me." Inez says to her, "Suppose I try to be your glass?"[1] That is precisely the function the others have for each of the occupants of Sartre's room in Hell, as the following words explain:

> The true subject of the play . . . is neither in the anecdotal interest of a few adventures or perversions, nor in the modernist pathos of the allegory of Hell, but in the relation of one consciousness to another, in the search for a definition of the self with the help of others, in the realization that the presence and judgment of others is necessary and yet leads to an impasse. . . . the image of Hell is a metaphor of the hopeless suffering of individuals in search of their definitions in the eyes of others, yet constantly brought back to themselves.[2]

The struggle for a satisfactory self-definition is not fully developed in the two women, but centers in Garcin. Each of the women tells her story, then shows a willingness

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[1] Jean Paul Sartre, "No Exit," No Exit and Three Other Plays (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1948), p. 20.

[2] Guicharnaud, op. cit., p. 145.

to accept the evaluation the others give. Inez even seems to relish her evil nature, and seems more intent upon cultivating a homosexual relationship with Estelle than upon convincing the others that she is better than they think. Estelle wants an affair with Garcin and seems little interested in revising anyone's opinion of her. Garcin is the one who cannot rest, but continually tries to justify himself to the others, hoping to get them to reflect a more satisfying image of himself.

Garcin needs one person to have faith in him, to say that he is not a coward, but a brave and decent man. Since Inez has long since decided that he is a coward, he sees Estelle as his only hope. Unfortunately for Garcin, she is not interested in his suffering; she wants him to be her lover, and will say anything to get into his arms. Garcin finally recognizes that he must struggle for self-definition with Inez, the one who understands from experience what cowardice is. By now he hears no more about himself from the men in the pressroom, and it is Inez alone who cares enough about the question to call him a coward. He must convince her that he is not a coward. "Only you two remain to give a thought to me. She (Estelle) -- she doesn't count. It's you who matter; you who hate me. If you'll have faith in me I'm saved."[1]

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[1]Sartre, op. cit., p. 44.

The metaphor of the looking glass comes in again near the end of the play. Garcin asks Inez, "You will always see me?" When she answers "Always," he knows what it is to be in hell. In the last part of his recognition speech he says:

> So this is hell. I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the 'burning marl,' Old Wives' tales! There's no need for redhot pokers. Hell is -- other people.[1]

Garcin's arrival at this understanding of his situation is evidence of a linear movement, a growth of understanding. But the linear movement is less important than the circular movement that has been discussed. Garcin's growth is part of the literal surface of the plot; it brings him to the point of recognizing that he is trapped in a circle of self-deception and efforts to get the others to call him a hero. His "Hell" is the result of his failure to assume responsibility for his own acts and of his persistence in thinking that he <u>is</u> what he <u>wants</u> to be, rather than what his acts have made him. His "Hell" is the refusal of the others to tell him that he is a hero and not a coward. Allan Lewis expressed the meaning of the play in these words: "Hell is the opposite of existence. Man can no longer create his destiny. The necessity to have others

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 47.

assert one's personality is negation."[1]

The circular movement of No Exit, like that of Waiting for Godot, is the result of the characters' persistence in an endlessly repetitive and fruitless action. As Vladimir and Estragon return again and again to various themes, so Garcin returns ever and again to his effort to get a gratifying image of himself from the others.

Both plays are metaphors of life. Godot presents life as a pathetic struggle for dignity and hope, in a barren world that mocks all hope and all efforts of men to find meaning in life. No Exit suggests that life is a "Hell" of suffering, brought on by men's refusal to act boldly, assuming responsibility for their own acts. Those who refuse to create their own essence in this bold fashion are reduced to the status of things and are forever condemned to being defined by others, not by themselves.

Both plays seem designed to move the audience to recognition. The reader or viewer is supposed to begin by observing how absurd and futile is the life of the characters. At some point he is supposed to be shocked by recognition, seeing himself and his life reflected in the tragicomical dance 'round the prickly pear. Sartre's play seems to have some moral purpose. His philosophy calls upon men

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[1]Allan Lewis, The Contemporary Theatre (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1962), p. 206.

to rise above the absurd round of self-deceit and dependence upon others. He wants men to assume responsibility for their own acts and to live more authentically. Beckett does not make a moral purpose clear in his play. He seems to be satisfied to show us where we are and what we are doing, as he sees it. No Exit represents Sartre's effort to discover a viable basis for moral action, to replace the traditional religions of Western man, which, in his view, are no longer operative. Waiting for Godot has more power than No Exit to evoke and express the despair that permeates the tone of life in the middle of the twentieth century; yet it reveals a yearning for religious values, similar to that expressed in some of Hardy's poems. Both plays speak to the moral and religious conditions of our time, but one is a revelation of spiritual poverty and need, and the other is an implicit call to a new kind of moral action.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The major task of this study was the classification of a body of modern religious plays according to their patterns of movement. It was proposed that the study should examine more than merely the action and incidents of the surface of these plays. The meaning of events and of human action was to be the major object of study, and the meaning was to be interpreted in terms of changes within characters. The reason for this concentration on events beneath the surface was summed up very well in the following words from an account of the development of drama:

> . . . the movement took place within the characters in the story. The theatre became concerned with the interior movements a man makes as he confronts the Mystery in his life.[1]

To the degree that the study has described surface movement without relating it to the interior movements of characters, the study has fallen short of its stated purpose. At any rate, the forty-odd plays used as a basis for the study fell readily into six fundamental patterns, and examples of the types have been examined.

It is clear that modern religious drama has not developed any new dramatic patterns; it uses the same pat-

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[1]Bill Cozart, "To Live Again," Letter to Laymen, VII (December, 1960), 1.

terns dramatists have used for centuries. Modern religious drama differs from the drama of earlier ages in the particulars that are fitted into the patterns. For example, the salvation attained by Everyman is an abstraction, in spite of the personification of his virtues. The salvation worked out by Edward and Laviaia Chamberlayne is very concrete; it is scarcely verbalized, but is shown in the details of the relationship between Edward and Lavinia many months after the opening cocktail party. MacLeish drops the natural disasters of the Book of Job and substitutes a series of man-made catastrophes, suggestive of the Atomic Age, to reduce J. B. to his solitary suffering. Many of the playwrights represented in this study seem to be trying to throw a religious light on the concrete problems of life in their own times.

Closely related to the patterns of movement employed is the vision of man and his place in the universe. The Tidings Brought to Mary portrays man as having an important place in the divine economy. Waiting for Godot portrays man as a pathetic being, one who tries to comfort himself with vague hopes, but who is doomed to be disappointed. Claudel's play uses a linear pattern, and Beckett's uses a circle. Generally speaking, those plays which most clearly express the Christian faith employ patterns of movement which can be represented by linear diagrams, expressive of forward move-

ment. The proposition is not reversible, since some plays that use linear patterns do not clearly express the Christian faith. It is true, however, that none of the plays using the linear pattern has a negative view of man and his place in the universe. As an example, The Queen and the Rebels moves from the ironic dehumanization of a "people's" revolt to a powerful affirmation of the inherent dignity of man and of the importance of his place in the universe; yet the play is not explicitly Christian. The question arises whether effective religious drama must use a linear, affirmative pattern of movement, avoiding the implicit negativism of the circle, or of a linear pattern showing moral decline. The overwhelming bulk of religious drama, including the plays read but not examined in this paper, uses some form of linear pattern, with an affirmative theme. The practice implies that affirmation is the most effective means of moving audiences. Can there be no religious value in a negative presentation of man and his place in the universe?

A long passage from Cozart's discussion of the rise of drama offers a convenient approach to answering that question:

> In order for the theatre to renew life, there must be a myth behind it -- for it is almost impossible to talk about the wholeness and significance of existence without a myth. As we have seen, the ancient theatre did have a myth behind it, the myth of absolute dependence upon the Mystery. Greek theatre grew out of Greek mythology and the Medieval plays grew out of the understanding that the Christ event was a cosmic happening

> which bestowed wholeness upon all the universe. But today, with Biblical symbols almost totally dead for most people, we find ourselves without a picture of the unity of the world. . . . If the theatre of today is to continue to enable people to begin their lives again, then its mythological movement must in some way deal with our turning from the past to the future for the purpose of performing a task.[1]

It may be said of the plays treated in this study that those which are most affirmative in their approach to man and his place in the universe are firmly supported by the Christian myth, whereas those that are most negative lack that support or grounding. J.B. manages to be affirmative without specific invocation of either the Jewish or the Christian myth, but part of its affirmative power may well be derived from its use of a story, language, and symbols that are a part of those myths. Waiting for Godot evokes the world of "Dover Beach" and "The Darkling Thrush," with the dreariness of the "naked shingles" rendered the more dreary by wistful references to the Christian myth, which is a dead hope for Didi and Gogo, pointing up the futility of their endless waiting for Godot. The three characters in the metaphorical "Hell" of No Exit are even more distant from the Christian myth than the tramps of Godot, and their experience projects a despair as profound as that of Godot.

The use of a negative pattern of movement, together with the abandoning of the Christian myth, does not neces-

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[1] Ibid., p. 2.

sarily make a play less effective in the renewal of life than are those plays which are affirmative in movement and theme. An audience viewing Godot or No Exit will begin to see the absurdity of all things for the characters and will perhaps feel a certain sense of superiority to the characters and their situation. But at some point the shock of recognition will overtake the audience, and they will begin to see that they are waiting for some Godot or other, or that they are in the "Hell" of mutual torture. This recognition of personal involvement in an intolerable situation will hopefully move the audience to look for a way out of this place that Didi and Gogo cannot leave, or where Inez, Estelle and Garcin are locked.

It appears that religious dramatists have concentrated too much on affirmation, overlooking or fearing the dramatization of a negative view of man and the possibilities life holds for him. Affirmation has been the predominant pattern for preaching and hortatory writing, so that religious dramatists may have assumed the familiar pattern of religious teaching, thereby overlooking the power of negation to generate a reaction of affirmation. Careful study of the religious potential in dramas written by the Existentialists and Absurdists, together with others who reject the religious tradition of the West, should reveal some interesting possibilities for dramatists who are con-

cerned about making a valuable contribution to modern religious drama.

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